MIS' BEAUTY

HELEN S. WOODRUFF

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BY

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ILLUSTRATIONS
BY W. L. JACOBS

TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS

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To

Ole Marse and Ole Mis'

O. E. S. and E. W. S.

This little book is lovingly

Dedicated

ILLUSTRATIONS

Mis' Beauty . . . . . *Frontispiece*

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MIS' BEAUTY

CHAPTER I

THE Lee plantation lay silent and peaceful in the sun. Even the Great House on the hill, with its green-bowed shutters and vine-wreathed porches, wore an air of almost archaic calm. It was Sunday afternoon, and the only visible signs of life were those in the negro quarters a short distance from the House, where the usual Sunday preparations for church were going on. Passing through a long lane of magnolias leading to the cabins, Cookie, ruler of the kitchen domains of the Lee mansion, arrived at a tall tree under which an indifferent goat was browsing, and heard Mammy's voice beyond.

"You'se gwine be late, Mis' Richardson,

ef yer keeps primpifyin' dat good-fer-nothin', no-count nigger all day," Cookie announced, as she passed a cabin door where Mammy sat combing Black Mat's kinky wool with a curry-comb, dividing it into dozens of pieces all over her head, and tying each piece with gaily colored string.

"Yas'm, I knows I is, Mis' Averett, but I got to make dis pickaninny out-favor herse'f on Sunday," replied Mammy, as she gave another yank to the tightly twisted strands. "Hole still dar, nigger, or I'll buss yer wide open wid dis comb! How yer 'speck me ter git ter meetin' to heah my own flesh an' blood husban' preach ef I doan git yer twilight made! What wid you, an' Uncle Shoddy's sheenanikin eve'y Sunday befo' he riles de Spirit up 'nough to call dem which am sinners to de mo'ners' bench, I'se 'bout to lose my 'ligion, I sho' is!"

Cookie laughed, a humorous gleam in her kindly, cynical eyes. She planted her thin figure, clad in its time-honored Sunday

garb, squarely before Mammy and Black Mat as she remarked:

"Well, Mis' Richardson, dis worl' am sho' a contrary plant; niggers always workin' to git de kinks out, an' white folks workin' to git dem in." Gathering up her ample skirts as she prepared to move churchward, she added, "I reckon t'aint no use to wait fer you-alls, so I'll jes' preambulate 'long."

"Law yes, honey, doan yer wait fer us. De Richardsons ain't no nearer dressed dan dey is to Heaven, dey sho' ain't. But dar, gal," giving a final yank that brought Black Mat up on tiptoe, "you'se done, thank de Lawd! Go set under der tree wid de goat till I gets dressed. T'aint gwine take me long, fer I ain't fool 'nough to try to conquer dis perishin' worl' wid looks. I goes on my shape an' talents, I does," declared Mammy, proudly patting her rotund hips and gazing significantly at Cookie's shapeless form.

"Humph, 'eve'y man fer his own figger,' remarked de Hippopotmuss to de *Giraffe*," quoted Cookie, contentedly looking down at her own skirt spreading over the enormous hoopskirt she always wore. "T'war'nt ladylike nor yit decent to go widout," she declared when viewing hoopless females walking about unencumbered, and added scornfully, "Hit beats all how ladies acknowledge deir laigs dese days. Well, thank de Lawd, I uses my laigs as unseemingly as I kin."

Cookie was a "Quality nigger," and, as such, "sot in her ways." Nothing could have persuaded her to change the style of her dress of mourning silk, worn with a white kerchief year in and year out. Her poke bonnet was trimmed with waving black plumes that bobbed and courtesied whenever she met "de Quality," but which stood as stiffly as she when any "po' white trash" were around.

As she turned the corner of the Great

House, the children, led by little Mis' Cleveland, came dashing out of the door. This second daughter of the family had been given such a nickname on account of being, as Cookie said, "fine 'nough to set up in de White House." As she spied Cookie, whom all the children adored, she raced after her, followed by Brother and Little Sister, known far and wide as her "echoes," because they promptly and unsuccessfully imitated Mis' Cleveland's every act and word.

"Hello, Cookie," Mis' Cleveland called shrilly. "Where you going?"

Cookie was walking on her dignity, and also on her churchward way, and so gave no sign of having heard.

"Cookie, I say! Where you going?"

No answer. Persistent demands from Mis' Cleveland and the echoes continued. Finally goaded nature reached its limits and Cookie turned peremptorily.

"I'se gwine whar I'se gwine, dat's whar

I'se gwine, so you jes' hush dat fuss," she announced,—then moved on down the driveway, majestic and unruffled as before.

"Well, I bet I can find out, so there—ya, ya!" cried Mis' Cleveland, daringly, but the rest of the threat died in her throat and she stopped short as Cookie half stopped and cast a warning glance over her shoulder. She knew well the meaning of that glance. But she didn't intend to be daunted in finding out where Cookie was going. "Come on, kids," she called to Brother and Little Sister. "We'll ask Mammy; she'll tell us!"

All three raced off down the drive, passing Cookie, who took no more notice of them than if they had been impertinent shadows; for she chose to pretend that they had incurred her serious displeasure. Reaching Mammy's cabin, they beheld Black Mat sitting patiently under the tree with her "haar wropped," and the goat browsing near. Immediately Mis' Cleveland divined the whole situation. Black Mat's hair was so

evidently adorned for church, both Mammy and Cookie must be going too, as it invariably took them both to manage Black Mat on such occasions. Mis' Cleveland advanced and fired the first gun.

"Bet I can guess where you're going, Black Mat!"

"Bet yer can't."

"Bet I can—to church!"

"I ain't; I'se goin' to meetin'."

"Bet I can guess what Mammy's doing! She's putting on her blue dress to go too."

"She ain't; she's a-puttin' on de new flowery dress—ya, ya, ya!"

"Bet she hasn't got any new flowery dress—" but here Mammy appeared at her open cabin door, and Mis' Cleveland and the others were struck dumb with admiration. Mammy and the perfume of Vanilla Extract (which she used as toilette water) seemed to fill the whole out-of-doors, as she shook out her skirts and descended the steps. In the past she had had a waist line;

but it had long since been claimed by bounteous Nature, and filled to overflowing. Nevertheless, she wore a red sash where it ought to have been, and this served to restrain the oceans of flowered lawn that swelled out in waves about her, encircling her globular person, and making it an eternal question whether she were coming or going. Her ample shoulders, where two generations of little Lees had slept and wept out their childish woes, looked as soft and comfortable as a feather bed. From out her ebony features two rolling black eyes beamed with kindliness and mirth, and her gleaming white teeth shone as she looked from beneath an old stovepipe hat, trimmed with a flowing veil to give the touch of the eternal feminine. She descended the steps slowly, her lawn surging about her, and her veil fluttering like a banner of defiance.

"What's dis confuss I heahs, chillens?" she demanded, her face wreathed in smiles

as she noted the effect of her garb on the youngsters. "Ain't yer 'shamed to be sassin' each udder on Sunday!"

Suddenly a new idea broke on Mis' Cleveland. Flinging herself into the lawn ocean, and looking up imploringly into the smiling face, she demanded: "Mammy, we want to go to church with you and Cookie and Black Mat. Please take us. We'll be good."

"P'ease take us," lisped Little Sister, her golden curls bobbing in her eagerness.

"If you don't," threatened Brother with his usual bravado; "we'll run up in the Ding-Dong."

Mammy hesitated, but only for an instant. The height of the spider-legged structure in the town that held aloft a huge bell, once rung as the signal of Confederate victories to the waiting plantations, always struck terror to her heart, for her greatest fear was that some day one of the children might climb aloft slowly, and de-

scend violently. Brother was quite aware of this fear, and tactfully used this particular threat only on extra occasions.

"Well, run ax yer Ma fer perliteness," conceded Mammy, heaving a sigh of relief, "den git yer hats an' come on."

The trio scattered in a rush for the house, and Mammy followed as swiftly as her girth would permit. She reached the porch in time to meet them as they tore forth, while Mrs. Lee, mistress of one of the loveliest ante bellum homes in the South, stood in the door to watch them off.

"Remember, Mammy, Mis' Beauty comes home to-day. Be sure to come back in time to greet her," she called after them.

"Yas'm, we'll be back time 'nough to greet Mis' Beauty when she 'rives, we sho' will. 'Kase we-alls wants to see dat angel face pow'ful much, we sho' do!

"Come 'long now, chillens, we better be a-startin'. Heah, Little Sister, you take my lef' hand-of-fellowship, an' Brudder,

you take my right. Yes, yer will too," she added firmly as Brother began backing off, declaring that he intended to walk by himself. "Well den, Marse Mule," she yielded, "walk 'long by yerse'f. If all mules is as stubborn as you is, I sho' doan blame Marse Baalam fer a-beatin' hissen, fer I sho' would like ter beat you when yer ac' dis a-way. Yer ought ter be beat eve'y mornin' of yer life ennyhow, jes' reg'lar, 'kase yer sho' gwine ter need hit some time durin' de day, an' hits jes' as well to git it over wid, an' have pleasantries durin' de res' of de time." Just then Mis' Cleveland stopped to pick a flower by the dusty roadside and Black Mat promptly followed her example. Mammy shook an encouraging head toward them and continued, "Dat's right, Mis' Clevelan', you an' Black Mat kind of santer 'long an' 'muse yerse'fs till Uncle Shoddy come. Ain't no use of us a-gittin' to church fo' de preacher do; but hit look like to me Uncle Shoddy gits

wosser 'bout primpifyin' hisse'f eve'y Sunday, de ol'er he gits. Ef he is my ole man, I'se gwine quit him, ef he doan look out! Always a-makin' eyes at dat yeller gal Mary Jane over to Mis' Jones's, an' trackin' de 'tentions of all de udder sisterin on Sunday." She stopped, her attention attracted by an approaching figure, who greeted her with a beaming smile, and saluted her flatteringly:

"Good mornin', Mis' Richardson. You an' de chillen won't look any better in yer coffins dan yer do dis bussle bright mornin'!"

"Good mornin' yose'f," returned Mammy coldly. The greeting had interrupted her jealous thoughts, and she resented the intrusion. As soon as Mary Jane had passed, she resumed her suspicious mutterings. "Humph! I done quit him onct, an' I reckons I kin do it agin, but de nex' time dar's gwine be a deevorce, I kin tell yer! Humph! hit's you, is it?" as Uncle

"WELL, YER KIN JES' WALK 'LONG BEHIN'
WHAR YER B'LONGS"

Shoddy suddenly appeared, "a-slippin' an' slidin' up behin' like de weary sarpint to see what yer kin heah. Folks talkin' 'bout Evesdroppin'! 'Pears to me hit oughter be called Adams-droppin' when de gemmans is up to it as much as you is! Well, I doan keer ef yer did heah me, an' I'll dares to say hit again too, ef I likes." Mammy paused to get her breath; then continued her monologue. "So you'se decided to come on 'bout yer business is yer? Well, yer kin jes' walk 'long behin' whar yer b'longs. Yer never is been my ekle nohow." Here Uncle Shoddy plucked up courage to quote slyly: "Womans was made arter mans, sayeth de Lawd," but Mammy turned on him with withering scorn. "Doan yer come talkin' to me 'bout 'womans was made arter mans!' Dat doan signify wid me. Dis ain't no gyarden of Eden nohow, so yer kin jes' take secon' place dis time, I reckon! I'se gwine be one of dem Womans Suffers Advotecakers you'se been hearin' 'bout, I

is, an' I jes' as well start right now, fo' yer gits too big fer yer breeches!"

The little procession plodded on up the dusty "big" road to the wooden building on the summit of a small hill, which the colored people for miles around knew as Mt. Zion. Darkies arrayed in all the colors of the rainbow were crowding in, laughing and giggling, their faces turning to gravity as soon as they entered the low door. Mammy's face brightened as she caught sight of some of her friends, and she was hurrying forward eagerly, when Mis' Cleveland, who had been peeping in, ran lightly back.

"Cookie's inside, Mammy, just in front of the Amen corner. Let's go sit with her!"

"Now, chillens," warned Mammy. "Doan yer make no confuss. Lemme go fust, an' you-alls tiptoe down 'hind me. Pick up yer feet, Black Mat! I declar' fo' Gawd I'se never seed sich nigger feet—dey'll hole yer to dis yearth arter yer wings is sprouted

an' yer's ready ter fly away ter Glory, if yer doan learn ter use dem better dan yer does now!"

Mammy entered the church with a majestic swing. Right behind her tiptoed Mis' Cleveland, Brother, Little Sister and Black Mat, their faces ashine with the joy of the unusual. When they reached the pew where Cookie sat, Mammy addressed her unseeing, erect figure. "Good evenin', Mis' Averett. Kin we-alls set heah?"

"Humph!" was Cookie's ejaculation as she gazed coldly upon the group. "Didn't yer 'low yer was gwine to when yer come? Well den, save yer questions an' come on in. Dar's never no use kickin' 'gainst Providence an' chillen. Hit doan do no good. Bof of 'em comes whether yer wants 'em or not, I'se noticed."

Despite this discouraging welcome, Mammy and the children filed into the pew, and when Uncle Shoddy appeared in the pulpit, Bible in hand and the look of an en-

raptured saint on his dark countenance, Mammy's face was as reverent and composed as if he had never been bidden to walk behind her as not being her "ekle." Others of the congregation felt the honest solemnity in the preacher's face and mien. "Brother Shoddy sho' has de face of a black angel," whispered Sister Mary Jane, who on week days did not hesitate to flirt with him, but on Sundays regarded him with awe and trembling. He was a "preacher of de Gospel" then, and his dignity kept pace with the congregation's expectations. To-day, his "angel face" had been made to shine by much use of soap and water, as well as by a free application of "haar ile" on his kinky gray beard. The collar of his "biled" shirt was set off by a scarlet tie. His vest of flowered brocade had belonged to some ancestral Lee, as had his brown checkered "pigeon-tailed" coat. Black trousers, tan shoes and white spats completed his minis-

terial costume, in which old Uncle Shoddy, despite his years, was still a pleasing figure; altogether too much so for Mammy's comfort. But forgetting her usual jealousy she listened reverently as he announced:

"We'll sing 'Shout-de-Will-o'-My-Jesus,' arter which Brudder Ab'ham Smith will lead us in prayer, an' den I'll giv' you-alls my tex'!"

CHAPTER II

THE Great House on the hill had been occupied for generations by the Lee family. The name was famous through many counties, and the present master, his wife and four children were as loved and revered as any of the stately ancestors had been whose names and deeds had gone down in history. "Ole Marse" was handsome and imposing in presence, and his wife, called "Dear-dear" by her children and close friends, was the typical gracious mistress of a Southern home, reared in pleasure and plenty, accustomed to the management of a host of colored servants, and adored by all of them. Little Mis' Cleveland and the two smaller children comprised the younger element of the family, and Mis' Beauty, the eldest, had been conceded ever since her birth to be the flower of the flock. She

had been away for three months visiting relatives scattered through the South, and to-day was a gala one on the Lee plantation, for Mis' Beauty was coming home.

After the departure of Mammy and the children for church, Mrs. Lee moved restlessly about the large rooms, picking a faded leaf from a vase of flowers, straightening an ornament, and pausing every now and then to glance fondly at a large painting which occupied the space over the fireplace, where huge logs were laid ready for need. The painting was a portrait of Mis' Beauty in the full glow of her youth and loveliness, and so arch and sweet was the expression of the gray eyes, darkly rimmed by their long black lashes, so beautiful the exquisite curves of the mouth, so pure and perfect the girlish oval of the face, surmounted by a mass of golden brown hair, that Mrs. Lee, accustomed as she was to the sight, stood once more gazing entranced upon the beautiful portrait. "To think

she is really coming to-day," she murmured. "Dear little Mis' Beauty! Although she is my own child, I have never seen a lovelier face or known a lovelier nature. God bless you, dear!"

She turned away from the portrait and passed quickly through the latticed passageway leading to the great kitchen. Here everything was in order, for Cookie was proud of her domain and ruled it with a relentless hand. No "low-down nigger" could approach that shining floor without being sworn to leave no trace of dirt upon its speckless boards. No pickaninny would venture to put so much as a black eye inside without permission. But the kitchen was empty just now, and seemed very still. Taking a hasty look into the big pantry, Mrs. Lee saw, ranged in generous supplies, the special dainties of which Mis' Beauty was particularly fond. Her cream custards, Lady Baltimore cake,—everything for which she had ever expressed a prefer-

ence since she was a toddling baby, clinging uncertainly to Cookie's skirts as she pattered about the big stove. Mrs. Lee smiled with quiet satisfaction as she turned away. It's all here," she said happily. "I knew I could trust Cookie. I wish, though, that I did not feel so restless. Perhaps if I walk up to meet the children I'll feel quieter. I might even go to church." She laughed. "Why shouldn't I? It will be interesting to hear 'Brudder Shoddy.' I believe I will, for I cannot stay in the house. It seems to stifle me, somehow."

Catching up a broad-brimmed hat which lay on the hall table, and throwing a loose scarf about her neck, Mrs. Lee went down the broad steps and hurried along the driveway, following her unpremeditated resolve. She heard the musical voices of the negroes raised in "Shout de Will o' My Jesus" long before she got to the low church door, which stood invitingly open, and upon reaching it she at once entered. Looking

uneasily around for her children, she soon discovered their golden heads.

"Dar's Mis' Lee!" Uncle Shoddy exclaimed, amazed, but gracious. "Come right in, Ole Mis'. Me an' de Lawd an' de udder niggers is powful glad ter see you."

A great bobbing of heads and greeting smiles followed. Mrs. Lee, intimating that he should proceed with his sermon, sank down in one of the empty rear pews, half shielding her face with her hand, unconsciously soothed by the presence of those faithful souls. Uncle Shoddy raised himself to a majestic height, and in proud tones announced his text.*

"Bredderin, embracin' of de sisterin, I takes my tex' from de twoty-tooth verse of Spasms an' de 'Piscopalians of de Romans: 'I am de Rose of Sharon, an' de lilyers of de valley,' sayeth de Lawd.

* This is an actual sermon, taken down verbatim by the author from the lips of a colored preacher in the South.

"Now den, we will stop to pacify an' commint upon dat subjec' jes' as hit ought to be pacified an' comminted upon."

"Amen!" chorused the congregation.

"Jesus jes' uses de bodiment of de Rose of Sharon 'kase hit's de national flower, de beautifullest flower—de Rose of Sharon; de great bloom of Heaven's omnipity, de rose beyan' all udder roses. 'I am dat rose,' meanin' He is a flower beyan' all udder flowers—a rose among de thorns of de yearth, an' there in dem is!"

"Amen!" said Brother Abraham.

"Where dis rose growed," continued Uncle Shoddy, "'twas a valley; an' de peoples usen to gather aroun' in dat valley an' walk about, an' stroll about, an' den walk about some more, gittin' a free intercourse of air, so as dey could git de circumfaction of de flavories of dat rose an' de lilyers of de valley all in deir garmints, so as dey would smell good fer de Lawd's anointed. Now hit was de sweetes' rose, had de bes'

flavory, yer mus' reckomember, of any rose in dat valley, so natu'lly it were used on weddin' tables an' funerals an' parties an' all sich sweet flavory occasionments." Uncle Shoddy's eyes moistened at his eloquence as he went on, accompanied as he was by "Amens" from every corner.

"Now Solomen, who was ordained fer accomplishments, allays seen Chris' in dat shape—jes' de shape an' color of de Rose of Sharon. So he come to Solomen in dat figger an' shape one day, an' he say to Solomen: 'Look here, Marse Solomen, you got to buil' me a templement!' So Marse Solomen, he up an' buil' de Lawd a templement under de acts of de Mosiacal laws, by stretchin' his hands an' his heart towards Heaven, home of Gawd an' omnipity, an' prayin' agin all ferned nations—dem sunk in de originum of woe an' de jeoppedy of sin an' shame! Den all de priestes dere an' roundybout went into de templement whar dey keep de 'Holy-holy' a settin', an' dey

sacrify an' sacrify until it were all burned up to giv' a jubilation unto de Lawd."

"Hallelujah! Lamb of de Lawd!" cried Mary Jane, rocking herself back and forth in a spasm of religious fervor.

"Now looky yere, Mary Jane, doan yer git 'ligion to-day. I ain't got time," said Uncle Shoddy as the young girl continued to sway back and forth, moaning and crying.

"Jes' wait til' nex' week, honey; den I'll lead yer right into de fole.

"Den Heaven's volumen open," he continued solemnly, "an' Him in de figger an' shape of de Rose of Sharon come a showerin' down, an' giv' Marse Solomen wisdom an' glory, yea, even mo' dan de least of dese lilyers when Marse Solomen were not arrayed. Amen! De Lawd am a great an' umptious Gawd! 'I am de Rose of Sharon,' sayeth de Lawd, an' He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, an' feedeth my soul on sheep! He

leadeth me beside de still waters, an' says unto dem—'Peace, be still.' "

"Amen! Hallelujah!" again interrupted Mary Jane.

"Jesus, he come to cure all de sins of dis perishin' worl', Adam's transgrimations; to make enquirations to all, an' redeem hits cussedness everlastingly!

"Den Marse Solomen, he done resurrected de templement an' Marse David he wanter put de Ark in dar, but Gawd, he say to Marse David: 'Ugh, ugh, Marse David, you'se a man of bloodiness an' wars an' transgrimations, let Marse Solomen put hit in, 'kase he am a gemman of merchandise an' pieces. So Marse Solomen he up an' put de Ark in, jes' like Marse Peter say about hit in de Petticoats of de Pettiark. Den Marse Solomen, who was jes' 'bout to set down on his th'one, an' make hisse'f real comfor'able, looked th'u a telescope of faith, an' seed seven thousan' suns a shinin'!"

The warm Southern sun this moment

struck its glorious light full through the dingy little window on the upturned face of the orator darky, transforming it into something beautiful, so it seemed to Mrs. Lee, as she recalled his years of faithful service and loyal love.

"Marse Solomen was wise wid de wisdom of Gawd, an' were suttingly umptious an' full of unction," he continued. "He was wiser dan Isieyer—who was wounded frum de foundation of de yearth,—an' sweeter dan de lilyers of de valley.

"'I am de Rose of Sharon,' sayeth de Lawd. Now jes' lemme tell you 'bout Marse Solomen, what he done; fer he done done what de Lawd done tole him to do. Two ladies come along one bright mornin' in de Yeast, an' one was totin' a live baby, an' t'udder was totin' one dat was dead, an' dey bof says to Solomen: 'Good mornin' Marse Solomen.' An' Marse Solomen says to dem bof: 'Good mornin', ladies, what kin I do fer yer dis mornin'?' Den de ma of

de live baby, she up an' tell how de ma of de dead baby taken an' overlaid her dead baby, an' up an' claim de live baby was hern, an' she say like dis: 'De live one's mine!' An' t'udder one, she say like dis: 'No, it ain't, Marse Solomen, hit's mine!' And den dey fit an' dey fout, hollerin' an' sassin' each udder, sayin':

'Hit's mine!'

'Hit ain't yourn!'

'Hit is mine!'

'Hit ain't!'

until Marse Solomen was mos' crazy, 'cause he sho' did dislike to see ladies fight dat a-way. So he taken his swort, an' was jes' 'bout to cut de live baby in two hafs, laigs an' all, when de real ma, she up an' 'gin to cry, an' says: 'Oh, Marse Solomen, doan do dat! I'd rudder giv' it to dat woman dan to see hit kilt!'

"But t'udder lady, she jes' sot back on her dignity, watchin' to git her half when

Solomen had deevided hit. But, putty soon, Marse Solomen he begin to ruminate; den, like a crash, it come to him which were de rightful baby fer de rightful ma, an' he giv' de right baby to de right ma, makin' a reckerunion of fam'blies widout no fuss—accordingly. Glory be to de wisdom an' unction of Marse Solomen, who am wise to de fo'mos' parts of de yearth! Amen!"

"Amen! Amen, Brudder!" moaned the congregation in chorus.

" 'I am de Rose,' sayeth de Lawd—'an' a flower fer de daughters!' De daughters was fashioned fer Heaven, an' de mans was fashioned fer de daughters an' fer de pipirations of deir companions. Oh, ladies, dat is meant fer you! Yer was made fer our rectitude to shine like dat rose, to guide our feets in de paths of Christian-indevil, an' sen' us rambulatin' on our way to neverlastin' Glory!"

While her father was preaching, Black

Mat grew restless. Despite her mother's loudly whispered admonitions, she squirmed and wriggled until, in a moment of intense fervor in the pulpit, she slipped beneath the pew and crawled, surprisingly silent, toward the low window directly behind. During the absorption of the congregation she succeeded in raising herself until she hung, a grotesque sight, half in and half out of the church. The trees were in their first tender flush of budding green, and the lacy effect of the slender, waving branches held the eye of the child, and she was less restless than she had been since her entrance. Uncle Shoddy preached on. Suddenly Mis' Cleveland giggled as a big blue bottle-fly buzzed inconsequently toward Black Mat who, in her sudden swoop to evade it, knocked the stick which held up the window. In an instant, squalls of fright and pain came from without the church, while waving legs ending in enormous feet flourished violently within. The window sash neatly

separated the component parts of Black Mat.

"Good Gawd! I'll see dem feet till I die!" exclaimed Mammy as the congregation rose as one man to rescue the imperilled one.

"Ca'm yerse'f, jes' ca'm yerse'f, brudderin' an' sisterin'," entreated Uncle Shoddy.

"No winder on dis yere yearth could squash Black Mat's internal workins'," broke in Mammy. "Heah! Keep still dar till I kin git to yer. Stop dat win'millin' roun' till I kin git yer out. Now—" and she yanked Black Mat back to her seat. Then placidly to Uncle Shoddy:

"Proceed 'long wid de gospel of de Word."

Uncle Shoddy was in no wise disconcerted by the interruption to his discourse, and at once proceeded. "Well, to continue my tex', all womans should be de circumfaction of Gawd, an' a trouble in de

time of storms. Man were put to sleep, his blood were refined, he were operated upon, an' a rib were taken out an' made into a woman, de beautifyinest an' fullest cremation of de Lawd! She were cremated to set up in de house, refine her features, an' like John say in de 'Piscopalians of de Romans, fix up like a bride an' keep her mouf shut!

"'I am de Rose of Sharon,' sayeth de Lawd, when he done cause conquaves of de elements, an' Jesus come down from Heaven an' lef' jes' two a settin' up dar on de Trinity! 'I am dat Rose forever an' internally. Come unto me all ye dat thirst, eat, drink an' be merry!' Now Brudder Moses, he was gave de recommandments on Mt. Shinyeye, when he had a conflammation wid de Lawd, an' He 'splained to him what all dis confuss meant.

"An' so dis disappearance is illustrative of de tex', 'I am de Rose of Sharon, de lilyers of de valley,' sayeth de Lawd."

"Hallelujah," sing-songed Mary Jane. "Halle-lu-jah!"

"One day I was out in de gyarden when a vision come unto me. As I were taught, dere is a Gawd to serve an' a Hell to shern, an' never dying souls to save, an' fittin's fer de sky. An', as I thunk on dat burden, de heavier it become, until hit mowed me down. I throwed myse'f upon my face, confessed my sins, an' wept an' wallowed on de groun'! Den I lif' my haid from under dat burden an' come to myse'f. I jump upon my feet, an' lif' up my voice, an' cry:

" 'Glory be to Gawd.
Mice-soar-on-high.
Leap fer joy,
An' let 'er fly!
Nail my talents to de cross,
Den my soul hit won't git los'!
He sweeter dan any honeycomb,
Better dan any home-sweet-home.
Stronger dan any iron ban',
Oh Lawd Jesus is jes' gran'!'

"Amen."

When the sermon was finished, Mrs. Lee rose, and was about to pass out of the church, the negroes standing back until she got well out of the door, when suddenly Cookie, coming from the Amen corner, exclaimed in fright:

"Lawd, dar come Ole Marse a-tearin' up the road like a hant was arter him!"

Mrs. Lee turned deadly pale. As her husband reached her, he put out a supporting arm.

"Dear-dear," he said tenderly. "Come with me. Mis' Beauty needs you. She has been hurt. Steady, dear! Cookie, go home with the children as fast as you can. There has been trouble on the railroad, and we may not be home for several hours."

"Lawdy, Lawdy, Lawdy," wailed the negroes in a moaning chorus that seemed like an augury of further ill.

CHAPTER III

WHEN Marjory Lee, the little Mis' Beauty of the adoring plantation negroes, had started for home on that bright spring morning, there had not been a cloud to mar her joy. She had visited cousins to her heart's content, had been admired, fêted and envied, and now that she was fairly on her way to the home where she had been born, and which she loved with a passionate loyalty, she felt that her cup of happiness was full. She had been accompanied to the train by devoted cavaliers, petted and fussed over until the moment of departure by a contingent of aunts and uncles, and now, after waving the hundredth farewell, she began to straighten her numerous boxes of candy, flowers, and packages filled with gifts for the children, and to think over the pleasures of the past weeks. It was her

first experience in traveling alone, but the trip was short, and, wrapped in happy memories, Mis' Beauty felt no fear.

She sat down next the window, and watched the flying landscape dreamily. She knew it too well, however, for it to hold her attention long; so presently she looked curiously over the occupants of the car. Suddenly her face lighted with interest.

"What wonderful eyes," she thought, as she snatched a second glance at a tall figure at the other end of the car. I hope he doesn't see me looking. But he's probably used to people staring at him. He's what Cookie calls 'A Somebody,' I'll wager."

She leaned back again and looked from the window with half closed eyes. Her weeks of gayety had tired her, so when she drifted off into a light slumber she was wholly unconscious of the fact. She stirred uneasily once or twice, but the rhythmic motion of the train was lulling, and Mis'

Beauty floated drowsily into the land of dreams.

She had slept half an hour, when suddenly she was awakened by a frightful crash echoing through her brain. She heard someone shriek, wildly, agonizingly; then came a great stillness, and a darkness that enveloped the world.

. . .

"She's coming to again. That flask, please. Ah!" as Mis' Beauty's gray eyes opened to rest blindly on the face of the tall figure who was raising her head so gently to his knee.

"There, little girl! Don't move. Just tell your father's name. Good!" as Mis' Beauty whispered it through white lips. "Now the home address? That's all right. Brave little girl! Lend a hand some of you. We must get her out of this at once,—and keep her as straight as possible. I'm afraid it's her back!"

Several promptly offered their help, and

lifted Mis' Beauty from the ground and carried her as gently as rough hands could to a cot in the wrecking train, which had thundered alongside upon news of the disaster. The tall figure which seemed to be everywhere, assisting, commanding, consoling, delayed only to send a telegram to the address whispered by Mis' Beauty, and then when he had attended to the hurts of others, came and sat by her side in the car through hours which seemed to Mis' Beauty as if they would never end.

When the train finally panted into the station where Ole Marse stood supporting Ole Mis', deadly pale but otherwise calm, Dr. Stuyvesant saw that Mis' Beauty's eyes were open again, although her face wore an expression of unbearable pain.

"Here we are," he said reassuringly, as he lifted the little figure in his strong arms. "Almost home, little girl! Not much longer before we can help that pain a lot. Be brave now! You've been a perfect little

brick, and you mustn't disappoint us now."

Mis' Beauty, with an agonized effort, remained perfectly still. Her father and mother, after a glance at her white face, followed Dr. Stuyvesant to the ambulance standing ready, and the horses started slowly toward home.

Mammy sat gazing listlessly out of the window. The House was very still, for even the children were awed by the sense of disaster which seemed to be in the air, and in consequence, Mammy's hands were not so full as usual. Suddenly, as she spied a wagon coming slowly up the road, she called to Cookie.

"Lawdy-mussy, here come de control waggin'! Wonder what nigger's been 'rested now fer crap-shootin', an' razor killin'? Oh, Gawd, hit's a-comin' in here!"

Cookie rushed to her side to look, but immediately started for the door.

"Mis' Richardson, you keep dem chillens

outer de way, an' come heah yose'f to he'p; dat ain't no control-wagon; dat's de avalanche, an' mos' likely hit's po' little Mis' Beauty!"

Mammy's face was as ashy as Cookie's. "Lawdy goodness! den she sho' am hurt bad!"

The ambulance drew up slowly, and Mr. and Mrs. Lee got out and hurried up the steps.

"Cookie," Mrs. Lee said, "come with me to fix your Little Mis's bed. She is badly hurt."

Mr. Lee gave certain other necessary orders, and the household sped in all directions assisting in every way they could, while the children ran down and peeped into the ambulance with awe-stricken eyes at the white face of Marjory, whom, after negro fashion, they had christened "Sister Lee." When the doctor came up the steps with little Mis' Beauty in his arms the great hall was silent and ready. His quiet tones

brought a rush of quick tears down Mammy's cheeks.

" Steady, little girl. Don't cry now. It's almost over. We'll soon have you comfortable; so—" and he laid her down with the utmost care, turning away to hide the emotion in his eyes—the eyes that Marjory had thought so wonderful.

"Lawdy mussy," wailed the negroes in a sibilant chorus as they caught a glimpse of the exquisite face, white and torn with agony. "Lawdy mussy, de door of Heaven's standin' wide."

For weeks Mis' Beauty lay on her bed of pain; and during those weeks Dr. Stuyvesant was ever ready to meet her need. He had been on his way to spend a long anticipated vacation with an old friend, and had started on the train that met with the accident. He had noticed the pretty Southern girl, and when the accident occurred he had at once thought of her and was soon distressed to find her sorely in need of his help.

Knowing that Mis' Beauty might be seriously injured he had come home with her, answering the call of his professional instincts, and had remained at the Lee mansion, doing all he could to lessen her suffering.

During this time Cookie often said, "Law, honey, dars mo' sunshine in dis room, spite o' de cloud, dan enywhar else"—And so there was. But the clouds seemed to be growing thicker to those watching as time passed, and Mis' Beauty still lay helpless in her rose-bowered room. No wonder the three little Lees looked wide eyed and solemn whenever they peeped in at Sister Lee, and saw her lying there, trying to smile at them, but looking so white and frail! No wonder, too, that Mammy forgot to scold Uncle Shoddy and Black Mat as usual! The Angel of Death hovered near the Lee home, and everyone felt the sad hush that comes at such a time.

Cookie had refused absolutely to stay out

of the room and let the nurse and Ole Mis' have full charge—"Dat nuss likely 'nough got mo' sinse dan I is, but she ain't got mo' love, and love he'ps too, I reckon;" and as love did seem to help, she was allowed to do many things for the little invalid. No one else could tempt her appetite, which fact was a great joy and comfort to Cookie. "I maybe is Nuss No. 3, but I'se Cook No. 1," she would say—"and ef yer can't play the banjo, says I, den try to do de pattin', as de nex' bes' thing!"

Weeks had passed, however, and Mis' Beauty's lovely face, framed in its masses of golden brown curls, grew paler and paler, until Dr. Stuyvesant knew that some decisive step was necessary. To this end he had telephoned to several of his friends —well-known physicians—asking if they would come to the Lee place to consult with him on the case. The answers had been sent in the affirmative, and the young Northern doctor, who had already won

laurels in the medical world, stood this morning awaiting them in the library.

He walked restlessly to the window and gazed out into the old-fashioned rose garden below. It was a quaint old place and the doctor's eyes wandered over it with appreciation. Then a picture of Mis' Beauty's lovely, pale face, with its black-lashed eyes and bravely smiling lips, rose before him. He pulled out his watch with an impatient gesture. "They should be here by now," he muttered. "I mean to effect this cure. This case shouldn't down me, and it shan't, if my time or skill are worth anything."

"Dr. Stuyvesan'," called Cookie softly, as she caught sight of him looking frowningly out of the window into the rose garden. "Dem udder doctors what yer telefomed fer is come fer a constellation. You'll fin' dem in Ole Marse's study, sah; an' Nuss No. 1"—what she called the nurse who had come from the hospital—"says

you-alls kin come in Mis' Beauty's room whenever you likes; dat she's ready fer yer."

"Yes, thank you, Cookie. Tell the gentlemen to come to the library, please. I think we can talk better in here."

When the doctors entered the library, Mammy and Mis' Cleveland, who had been on the lookout since their arrival to listen to their talk and glean what they could, expressed their disappointment in emphatic terms as the door was tightly closed, permitting only a murmur of voices to come from the inside. "Humph, dey's pow'ful skeered we'd heah somethin', a-bangin' de door like dat," asserted Mammy resentfully. "Humph! Better come out in de kitchen, Mis' Clevelan', and write dat letter yer promised to fer me. Ain't no use a-hangin' roun' heah no mo'!"

"Dar sho' ain't, Mis' Richardson," said Cookie, who had not been incurious herself, as the three entered the kitchen again. "Hit's as hard ter git inflammation outen a

doctor as 'tis ter git money outen a Jew."

"Mammy," said Mis' Cleveland, who was soon curled up in a big kitchen chair, pencil and paper in hand, "I'm ready to write your letter if you'll tell me what to say. But I can't write like Dear-dear and Sister Lee, so don't tell me things too fast."

"Dar ain't much danger of dat," threw in Cookie. "Niggers' brains is too much like 'lasses!"

Mammy drew up a chair near Mis' Cleveland, and sat heavily down, her features shining with importance and delight.

" 'Dear Mandy; Suspected Frien',' " she dictated. " 'I seats myse'f pin in han' to write yer a few lines. I'se a-settin' in Mis' Lee's kitchen, an' Mis' Clevelan' what's a-writin' fer me is a settin' heah too. I'se well, an' doin' well, an' we'se all well an' doin' well 'ceptin' Little Mis' who's sufferin' considable an' I hopes when dese few lines comes to han' dey'll fin' you de same.'

"Is yer got dat down, honey? Well den, heah's mo'. 'How is you my deah Sister an' Brudder also? How is you an' Sallie gittin' 'long?' "

"But, Mammy," exclaimed Mis' Cleveland. "You're writing to Mandy!"

"Yes, I know I is, but you write what I tells you! I allers writes dis a-way 'kase dey-alls lives acrossen de road from t'other, an' one letter writ dis a-way, shoots two birds to oncest. Lawdy, whar's I at? I declar', Mis' Clevelan', you makes my brains a reg'lar lullyby, incorruptin' me like dat! Let's see. Oh—'How is you an' Sallie gittin' 'long? Black Mat is in de 2nd Reader a-goin' to school, so yer see she take consid'able eddication arter her Pa, which I sees a-comin' in now. He say, tell you he am well an' doin' well, an' gittin' 'long nicely wid Mis' Lee, an' Mis' Lee's a gittin' 'long nicely wid him — bein's she likes de gyarden ve'y much dis year, an' dey's gittin' 'long nicely togedder.' Got dat, Sugar-Baby?

Well den, s'pose yer reads me how fer yer writ now?"

This Mis' Cleveland did, and Mammy patted her fat sides in triumph. "I'se a boss letter writer, I is, even ef I can't write. Well, honey, close up wid dis. 'I'se a-holdin' to de Flag dear Sister-in-de-Lamb, an' ef de Flag giv' out, I'll hol' to de staff. Hopin' you is de same, an' trustin' in de Lawd, I'se your darlin' Mother — Mis' Richardson.' "

Cookie, who had been out during Mammy's dictation, now hurried in, looking as pale as her color would allow.

"Lawdy-mussy, Mis' Richardson, dem doctors done fru deir constellation, an' zamination, an' dey's gwine take Mis' Beauty to de Horsepittel dis evenin'!"

"Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy," moaned Mammy. "What dey gwine do dat fer?"

"Fer to opigrate, I reckon," said Cookie sternly. "Doctors tinks dey knows so much mo' dan de Lawd, dese days, dey's allers

tryin' to emprove on Nater! Well, dey'll sho' never git deir implements on me," she continued; "fer when I goes to de Heavenly gates, an' Marse Peter say: 'Is dat you, Mis' Averett?' I sho' gwine say: 'Yes'r, Marse Peter, hit's me, an' I'se jes' like I was borned;' fer doctors sho' ain't gwine git no souvenir of me! I believes in goin' to Heaven in a respectful manner, I does, wid yer utensils all in, an' yer close all on! No open-backed shrouds fer me, neider, says I, fer I sho' doan want to be shenanikin' 'roun' 'fore Marse Peter an' de udder gemmans wid my bare-back wide open! Nosah, I sho' don't!"

CHAPTER IV

"WHY, come in, Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte Jackson—come right in; we'se glad to see yer," said Cookie graciously, as she looked through her door and saw a dressy colored gentleman knocking. "An' mus' yer be goin' so soon, Mr. Gineral Grant?" as a big black man, dressed in white linen trousers and striped tennis coat, arose to depart.

"Mis' Clevelan', whar yer manners? Git off'en dat flo' an' tend to de gemman's hat!"

Mis' Cleveland rose and handed Mr. Grant his silk hat, saying:—"Here is your hat, Mr. General Grant, but where is your hurry?"

"Jes' listen to dat chile," whispered Cookie to Mammy, in an audible tone. You'd know she were fust-class ennywhar wid dem manners; fer manners does *de*clar'

Quality eve'y time! Dat's right honey, yer kin set back on de flo' now, but not *dar*," as Mis' Cleveland started to seat herself upon the hearth rug, "fer Mr. Jackson needs all dat space for his foots, he sho' do—Brudder, you an' Black Mat move furder towards Mammy an' Little Sister, an' give Mis' Clevelan' mo' room."

"I can't move no furder," complained Black Mat, "Brudder's got all de furder, an' ain't lef' me none," shoving herself nearer Mammy, however, while Mis' Cleveland squeezed into her place as best she could.

"An' how is you ladies dis gloriumfactious evenin'?" asked Mr. Jackson, as he settled himself comfortably.

"We'se po'ly, thank de Lawd, how's you?" chorused the ladies.

"Well—I'se jes' tolable—towards-middlin', thanky, but," glancing towards Cookie, "pow'ful lonesome, Mis' Averett, *pow'ful* lonesome dese days!"

"Humph, you'se a fool nigger," said Cookie, who was an old maid by choice, or as she herself styled it, a "choice old maid," and always discouraged his matrimonial advances in these few words. No opportunity of expressing his sentiments in some delicate hint was ever lost by him, however, as he never became entirely discouraged at any rebuff.

"Well, an' how's Mis' Beauty dis evenin'?"

"She's gittin' 'long jes' gran', thank de Lawd. I said t'udder evenin' to Marse Parable (I calls de doctor from Philameyork dat, since he done reconstructed Mis' Beauty like he have), 'Dis am one time, Marse Parable, you done cheated the Lawd outen' a angel, for Marse Peter sho' been anglin' arter her wid a line of sufferin' and a hook of pain.'"

"He sho' has, Mis' Averett," put in Mammy, "dat's one time yer done tole de truf. But I reckon dat opigration gwine make her good as new dis time."

"Yas'm, hit sho' is *ree*markable what 'silence kin do dese days,' as I heard Ole Mis' a-tellin' Ole Marse," continued Cookie. "He say Marse Parable tole him dey chop po' Little Mis's spiral-string wide open, den sewed hit togedder agin. An' ef dey hadn't," she stated authoritatively, "mos likely she'd a had a stroke of apperatus, fer it were intirely digested!"

"Yer doan say so! Well, Gawd bless my soul!" gasped Mammy, impressed, while Mr. Jackson's jaw hung wide open as he gazed at Cookie with awe and admiration.

"Yas'r," she continued, "he sho' say all dat, an' mo' too. Why he say—"

"Mammy, here comes Uncle Shoddy right in here!" interrupted Black Mat in a tone of excitement.

"He is—is he?" said Mammy threateningly. "Well, he kin jes' perlitely misplace hisse'f agin, fer I ain't gwine have no mo' to do wid him!" Turning, she saw him proceeding very meekly to lean against the

door-post. "Git outen heah, yer good-fer-nothin', no-count black varmint. Didn't I tell yer I'd done *quit* yer fer better or fer wuss dis time?" Uncle Shoddy opened his mouth to speak, but Mammy's tirade continued. "Yes, I did too—doan yer give me none of yer sass, neider!" Uncle Shoddy continued to lean and look wistfully in—"Git out, I say! I warned yer forty-'leven-dozen times dat de nex' time I ketched yer bein' so cowkettish wid dat yaller gal of Mis' Jones's I were gwine quit yer! An' heah I'se done ketched yer seven times dis week, a-hangin' over de gyarden fence, wastin' puffectly good bokays of flowers an' vegtibles on dat fool-nigger. An' I ain't gwine stan' fer hit no mo'! I means hit dis time too, I sho' does. I ain't got no mammynamity nor benobleness lef' fer yer! An' heah you comes a-sneakin' 'roun' on Sunday a-hopin' I'd pacify wid yer to keep a scramble outen de fambly. Well, I doan consider hit no scramble to git shet of you.

Hit would be a wusser one to hole onto yer, an' I'se gwine to be a green widow lady soon as I kin, an' I doan keer who knows hit!"

"But, Sally," quavered Uncle Shoddy as she stopped for breath—

"Doan yer 'Sally' me. I'se Mis' Richardson, when yer takes yer hat off to me! I'se gittin' a *dee*vorce jes' as fas' as Marse Jefferson kin 'range hit."

"But, Mis' Richardson—honey," pleaded Uncle Shoddy. "I jes' declar—" but he got no farther, for Mammy picked up the poker and started towards the door, whereupon Uncle Shoddy "misplaced" himself rapidly.

"I ain't got but one objection to dat nigger," said she, still flourishing the poker in the vacant doorway. "But dat objection kiver his whole pusson, an' I'se gwine git rid of him dis time, I sho' is."

"An' fer how long, ef I kin ax a imprudent question, Mis' Richardson," asked Cookie skeptically.

"Ferever, Amen, dat's how 'long! I'se 'pealed to Marse Jefferson fer a real sho' 'nough fust-class, ladylike *dee*vorcement, an' no nigger-quittin' papers 'bout hit dis time. Glory-be-in-de-Lamb!" as she reseated herself, and fanned violently to cool her anger, "I doan know as why I should *at*trac' dogs an' fools like I does, ennyhow!"

"Well, ef yer hadn't," remarked Cookie tartly, "yer wouldn't never married, Mis' Richardson."

Mr. Jackson cleared his throat at this tense moment, remarking, "Is yer gwine keep Black Mat, or give her to her Pa, dear frien'?" He seemed unfortunate in the choice of his conversational topics, however, for Mammy turned her wrath upon him:

"Humph, you'se a fool jes' like Mis' Averett say you is; axin' sich a fool question as dat! You think I'd give dat gal away, even ef she ain't wuth her feed (which she really ain't)! Well, I wouldn't, an' ennyhow Uncle Shoddy ain't got no claims on

her nohow, fer she's jes' his igligigimate daughter, bein' mine by my fust husban'. She ain't got no Richardson blood in her bones, no sah, she sho' ain't, I praises de Lawd to say. She's de spittin' image of her own Pa, Mr. George Washington Johnson, bein' mulish an' pow'ful strong in her constitutions jes' like he were. Fer dat nigger were de mos' *in*delicate gemman I ever knowed, even dyin' of what you might call a artificial complaint, bein's as he were hung!"

They all sat rocking silently back and forth, Mr. Jackson not daring another remark, while Mis' Richardson gazed back into her happy past.

"Well, all dis confuss cures me of preachers of de Gospel," she broke out again. "I'se gwine backslide an' have a good time fer awhile now. No more meetin's fer me, no sah! I's gwine in socialciety for a spell, I sho' is!"

"Hello, Dear-dear," cried Little Sister

suddenly, as she spied her mother coming towards the door.

"Why there is Dear-dear sure enough," said Mis' Cleveland in a relieved voice, and the children jumped up and ran to meet her. They had not dared move during Mammy's tirade lest her wrath descend upon them, so now they welcomed the diversion of their mother's coming. She pushed them aside, however, and entering, exclaimed reprovingly: "Mammy, what's this foolishness about a divorce Uncle Shoddy has just been telling me? You ought to be ashamed to treat him as you do. Besides, you know you don't mean a word you say!"

"Yas'm, I does, Ole Mis', I sho' does, dis time. He's played wid a burnt-child-in-de-fire onct too often, an' I'se gittin' a real live *dee*vorce dis time, sho' 'nough!"

"Nonsense, Mammy; you don't want to be working right in the same place with your divorced husband, do you? And you know neither of you wants to quit me!"

"Lawd, honey, I doan mind workin' wid Uncle Shoddy—doan let dat worry your puddy haid. We'se gwine be puffect strangers arter we gits de *dee*vorcement. He kin eat his own vittels an' I kin eat mine widout no consarnmint fer each udder."

"But I can't have this quarreling going on, Mammy; it's disgraceful!"

"Law, chile, dar ain't gwine be no qua'elin' goin' on. *Dee*vorces is made fer to stop qua'els, an' 'sides dat, I can't qua'el wid a puffect stranger, hit wouldn't be ladylike, honey. I reckon I knows how to ac' outside my own fambly!" tossing her head.

"Well, I hope you'll think better of it soon. I'm sure you will be sorry after you do get rid of Uncle Shoddy, for you couldn't find another nigger as good as he if you hunted all your life! Come, children, come to the House with me!"

"Dat's good device, seems to me, Mis' Richardson, dat Ole Mis' giv' yer," remarked Mr. Jackson, as they sat watching

her and the children go towards the House, "fer marriage blisses is all—"

"Snaps an' snarls, an' beatin's an' quar'ls," put in Mis' Averett. "Jes' s'cuse me from bein' ennybody's half—I'se glad de Lawd didn't even make me twinses fer hit would be hard 'nough to git 'long wid a borned half, much lessen a half dat ain't no kin to yer; an' I'se pow'ful glad I'se a ole maid."

Mr. Jackson sighed, looked lonesomer than ever and said: "I'se pow'ful 'fraid all yer idees is cut on de bias, Mis' Averett, I sholy is!"

CHAPTER V

"DAR sho' ain't no use of supportin' a gemman when yer done los' yer taste fer him," said Mammy, who gratefully accepted her decree of divorce a few weeks after Uncle Shoddy's attempt at reconciliation, and was now enjoying her "green widowhood." There were no more quarrels, for she lived up to her promise of being a perfect stranger to him, though she continued to work in the House, and he in the Lee garden.

"Hit ain't as though Black Mat were de missin' link in our chain of ma'iage," said she to Mrs. Lee in explaining the situation, "to draw us togedder,—fer she's jes' the souvenir of my fust husban'. So you see, Ole Mis, dar really ain't nothin' to remin' me I were ever united to Mr. Richardson, an' I'se putty nigh forgot hit a-ready! Yas'm,

disrememberin' am a great comfort, hit sho' is!"

But Uncle Shoddy didn't seem able to "disremember." In fact Mammy possessed more charms for him now than ever. Mis' Jones's yaller gal was entirely neglected. He began to hang around Mammy's door in respectful silence, ready to cast an admiring glance whenever she came forth; especially on Sundays, when she went walking with other gentleman-friends rather than to church as formerly. Vegetables and flowers began to appear on her doorstep instead of being passed across the Jones's back fence. They were often accompanied by a note, or an original poem (in Mis' Cleveland's handwriting) with bits of coin enclosed, until even these attentions satisfied his longing soul no longer, and he enclosed a whole silver dollar with an inscription, written on a valentine:—

"To—Mis' Richardson—and, if I may say so—friend of mine—I send Roses red, and

violets blue, An this 'In-God-we-trust' to you."

"Law, now ain't dat gran', Mis' Averett? Now I knows I'se got dat fool nigger whar I wants him agin," said Mammy, as she displayed it to Cookie.

"Well, jes look out he doan git you whar he wants you agin, Mis' Richardson. Dis fool co'tin' business do lead to de halter I'se noticed, an' you'll be havin' to marry dat nigger de fust thing yer know."

"Lawdy-mussy, how you do talk, Mis' Averett," giggled Mammy. "But I'se ve'y *dis*encouragin' to Mr. Richardson, I sho' is! Last night he were serenadin' me wid dat accordium he sometimes borrows frum de church, an' I didn't let on I were hearin' fer a long time. Den, putty soon, I up an' santer to de winder an' look out. Dar he were, all dress up, standin' in de shade of de moon, a-wallin' his eyes, and a-singin' fit to bus' hisse'f! Lawd, hit sho' were romaniac! But I jes' natually knowed he need

*dis*encouragemint, so I pick up my shoe," chuckled Mammy, holding her sides for merriment, and swaying to and fro, "an' throwed hit—bang!—outen de winder at dat nigger's haid, an' disclaim, 'Lawd, de cats sho' do make a turrible noise to-night!' "

Here Mammy was completely overcome with laughter, sitting down on the ground to have it out, as was her wont when particularly tickled. "An' den, honey, yer should a-heahed dat nigger hush; an' den he commenced to run, an' "—but here the narrative stopped suddenly as they heard Ole Mis's voice calling them both from her window. Mammy's face sobered as she picked herself up, and started towards the House.

"Mis' Averett, what yer 'spose is de matter wid Ole Mis' and Ole Marse? Dey ain't like deyse'fs lately. Dey looks like de graveyard gate been lef' open all de time, 'stead a-lookin' rebumptious an' glad, like dey oughter, when Mis' Beauty am comin' home from de horsepittel so soon now!"

"'To dem what has,' quoted Cookie, "'shall be took away even dat what dey ain't got,'—as de Gospel-Book say, yer know, Mis' Richardson, an' frum what I'se picked up in a scattered-about way I'se 'fraid hits money troubles what's de matter wid Ole Mis' an' Ole Marse. Deys been losing a pow'ful lot lately, I reckon, jes' when dey needs hit mos'!"

"Humph, is dat all, Mis' Averett? Well yer do *re*lieve my brain consid'able. I'se been 'fraid it were somethin' ve'y se'ious. Dey oughter be shame deir se'fs to look so moanful over dat when Mis' Beauty's been spared to dem. What's money, no-how? Dey's Quality, wid plenty a' Quality blood in deir carcasses, so dey ain't got no confuss a-comin', as I kin see!"

"Well, blood ain't vittels, Mis' Richardson, an' yer can't pay doctors an' nusses wid hit, nor horsepittels an' sich, fer dey takes all dey kin git, ennyhow, den axes to be paid fer taking hit! I heahed Ole Mis' a-cryin'

through de keyhole t'other night. Ole Marse were a-telling her how he done sole all his realm estate, 'ceptin' de House an' dat ole mountain nobody doan want out dar near de coal mines, an' dat he didn't know what dey gwine do."

"Lawdy mussy, yer doan say so," said Mammy, somewhat impressed in spite of the fact money meant so little to her in connection with the Quality. "But why doan he git de Bank to buy some of dem slips of paper outen dat little red book of hissen? I'se never seed what dey wanted wid sich foolishness, but I'se seed dem give him all de money he wanted fer 'em, lots er times!"

They had reached Mrs. Lee's room by this time, where she stood waiting for them.

"Cookie, you and Mammy please come in here. I want to tell you something—"

"Oh Gawd, Ole Mis', Mis' Beauty ain't wosser, am she?" cried Mammy, alarmed at Mrs. Lee's grave tones, and beginning to wring her hands in excitement.

"Hush up, yer fool you," said Cookie, grabbing Mammy's arm and shaking her. "Cose tain't Mis' Beauty, or Ole Mis' wouldn't be so ca'm. Stop dat sheenanikin an' listen till you'se spoke to!"

Ole Mis' had to smile as she answered: "No, Mammy, Little Mis' is much better, and we hope can come home to-morrow. But your Ole Marse and I are in trouble, and I want you and Cookie who have been our friends so long to help us now."

"Lawd-bless-yer, honey, we sho' will," cried Mammy, while Cookie's eyes showed her emotion as she nodded assent.

"We've lost all our money," continued she, "and still we've got to give Mis' Beauty every comfort to help her get well. As I've told you, she is probably coming home to-morrow, and though we three believe we could take care of her without any other nurse—don't we?"—smiled she—"the doctors don't think so. And therefore, Cookie and Mammy, I'll have to let you two old

friends go; you'll have to quit me—"

"Quit yer?" chorused both of them, "*us* quit yer? Well, I jes' reckon not!"

"Who ever heard of quittin' de fambly of yer chice, jes' 'caze deys po'!" cried Mammy—"We jes' ain't a-gwine to, we sho' ain't!"

"But you'll *have* to go, Mammy, for Mrs. Page has promised to take you, and Mrs. Randolph wants you, Cookie. So you are both all fixed—No, no, don't argue"—as Mammy flung herself forward, and began a wild torrent of words and tears, moaning and groaning in her excitement.

"It *has* to be, Mammy! I've known it was coming a long time, but I just couldn't bear to tell you all. However, things must all be settled before Little Mis' comes home, for *she* must not know *anything about it.* We can easily keep it from her; for the little Pages are here so much, Mammy, that you'll be over here almost as much as ever. And therefore she can't miss you, you see, and ask

questions. She will have to be in her room anyway. Oh, I've thought it all out! Cookie, you can run in and out too, as naturally as ever, being so near by.—Don't cry so, Mammy dear.—It won't be so hard as you think, and you must both do this for me, for it will help me more than anything else you could do. You know I'm sending you away for your own good, and if I can ever afford it I'll take you right back! Now you had better both leave me, I'm so tired! Move your things to-day if possible. And, Cookie, I'll get breakfast to-morrow. Just you fix things as though you were going on a visit, and forget it's anything else!"

Mrs. Lee threw herself down to have her own cry, as Mammy, sobbing, left the room, followed silently by Cookie.

"Oh, I jes' knowed bad luck were comin', I sho' did," sobbed Mammy, "when I seed dat rabbit turn 'roun' an' cross de road yestiddy, widout spittin' in he tracks! Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy!!"

CHAPTER VI

THE morning after their dismissal Ole Mis' wakened to look anxiously at the clock; for she meant that the household should move on as smoothly as possible under the new conditions. Turning quickly to see what time it was, she was annoyed to find that it was nearly eight o'clock and that Ole Marse was standing at the window smiling quizzically at her.

"Oh Bob!" she exclaimed regretfully. "Why didn't you call me? Here I've overslept, and I have to get breakfast this morning, now that Cookie's gone. Didn't you remember?"

"I'm afraid you can't get breakfast, Deardear," answered Ole Marse cheerfully. "Not this morning, at least."

"Why, of course I can. What is the reason I can't?" Then seeing his smile broaden, she asked humorously: *"You*

haven't been trying to get it, have you?"

"Not I; but Cookie has. In fact she has given us all breakfast as usual. I got up early to make the fire, and there in the kitchen was Cookie! Of course I was astonished, and asked her what it meant. She calmly told me that she had 'done quit de Randolphs,' and practically ordered me out of the kitchen when I tried to argue with her."

Mrs. Lee looked troubled. "But her furniture was carried out last night, and the Randolphs expected her to stay; I know they did. She knows we can't pay her just now. But she's so set. What can I do?"

"I don't know. I spent an hour using every argument I could think of, but she only listened to me because it was Ole Marse. Anyway she seems determined not to leave, so I guess we've got to keep a cook whether we can afford it or not. Faithful old soul! I hope I can make it up to her some day."

When Ole Mis' had hurriedly dressed and with the light of resolve in her eye descended to the kitchen, Cookie was busily bustling about singing a hymn at the top of her voice. Mrs. Lee's heart sank as she recognized that bad sign, for Cookie never sang unless on the war-path, a characteristic inherited from her Indian chief grandfather. The wilder and weirder the strain the higher did Cookie's feelings flame, and now, as Ole Mis' drew near, it swelled out afresh, making her feel that her battle was lost before it was fought, which was precisely what Cookie wanted. Mrs. Lee advanced bravely. "Cookie, what are you doing here?"

A wild strain of singing swelled out. Mrs. Lee went on, trying to be stern. "I told you *I* intended to get breakfast this morning. Why aren't you at Mrs. Randolph's? Didn't I see your furniture carried out of the yard last night? Cookie, answer me!"

Cookie continued to sing without intermis-

sion, but her voice began to break, and a half groan at the end of every other word, which came unconsciously, showed the strength of her emotion. Mrs. Lee looked at the faithful old black face, rigid and set in grim resolve, and made her final appeal. "Oh Cookie," she pleaded, dropping hopelessly into a chair and resorting to tears as a means of influencing her, "*what* am I going to do with you?"

"Blessed chile!" cried Cookie warmly, stopping her battle chant at last, and kneeling at Ole Mis's side to put loving arms about her. "I doan want ter distress yer, honey, but I done quit Mis' Randolph. I did go over dar, jes' to tell her dat, fer I can't leave you dis a-way. I jes' natu'ally can't. Doan sen' me away, honey! You an' Ole Marse an' de chillens is all I'se got. Lemme stay, honey! Dar ain't nowhar else would be home but here. Sho'ly yer wouldn't take a po' ole nigger's home away from 'er! I doan want no pay but love. Dat funcher

yer seed a-goin' out didn't go to no Randolph house. No sah, hit sho' didn't. Hit went to dat second-handed-me-down shop. What do a ole nigger like me want wid anythin' 'cept a bed, ennyhow? An' Lawdy me, I done got so much money fer dat funcher, I ain't gwine need no mo' all my life. Honey, honey, doan yer cry so," for Mrs. Lee was weeping afresh. "Mis' Maria Averett wouldn't leave yer fer *nothin'*. Why, dar's Mis' Beauty a-comin' home dat needs me. Whose vittels could she eat 'ceptin' mine? Nobody's—dat's whose. An' dar's de chillen to governmint. Who'd do dat? Nobody—'cept me—dat's who! Fer Mammy, even when she were here, hadn't no patrol over 'em. Law, her heart's as sof' as her figger. She couldn't do nothin' wid 'em. Why, you'se gwine see such a reprovemint in dem chillens, honey, you'se gwine doubt 'fore long dat dey's yourn; fer I'se gwine disciple dem now, I sho' is! Lawdy, dar's dat telefome ringin'

of course, jes' at a crim'nal moment. Here now, you jes' set still, an' eat some of dese batter-cakes I'se gittin' fer yer," and she began to move about the kitchen as she talked. "I'se gwine make one of dem chillen answer dat 'fome.

"Here, Mis' Clevelan'," leaning out of the window whence she could see the group of little Lees playing in the yard. "I reckon yer condition ain't none too high to answer dat 'fome, so git—fast as yer kin—'fore I gits de batter-cake turner to dat settin' position of yourn!" Cookie chuckled knowingly as she turned. "Ole Mis', yer oughter seed dem chillens learnin' to dress dey-se'fs dis mornin'. I almos' wo' out a batter-cake turner on dem a-makin' dem do hit, but I guess dey won't disremember soon. I believes chillen was shaped to be ruled, an' not to rule, I does, an' you'se got real smart chillens when dey's got to be!"

Mis' Cleveland came running in, her eyes bright with information.

"It was Dr. Stuyvesant, Dear-dear," she said, dancing with joy. "And he says they are starting home with Sister Lee right now."

"Glory Hallelujah, chillens!" ejaculated Mammy, who had reached the kitchen door with her new charges just in time to hear the news. "Glory Hallelujah! Mis' Beauty's a-comin'!"

Stooping, she tried to take all the children in her arms, as the tears ran down her face. "Now ain't dis jes' gran', an' I'se natu'lly 'shamed of myse'f fer grumblin' 'kase I had ter exchange bo'din' houses when de Lawd's good 'nough to shet de door of Heaven in Mis' Beauty's face, an' sen' her home instead, like he done done! Come out on de po'ch, whar we kin git de fust glimmer of her!"

The children scampered for the porch, while Ole Mis' and Cookie hurried upstairs to see that everything was in readiness for the invalid. The pretty rose-bowered room

had been waiting for weeks, and they had hardly turned from giving the few final touches when a step sounded on the stair, and in another instant Dr. Stuyvesant walked into the room, carefully carrying the slender figure of Mis' Beauty in his strong arms.

"Hello, Dear-dear! Hello, Cookie!" called Mis' Beauty gayly, sending her most winsome smile to both. "How lovely it is to be home again," she said gratefully, as the doctor placed her gently in an armchair piled with cushions.

"Comfortable?" he asked. "Why, that chair's a regular throne for the little princess," he added, as she looked her thanks.

"Yes, very comfortable. And now I'm going to rule, instead of being ruled as I have been for two whole months!" rejoined Mis' Beauty, smiling at her mother with her old arch expression which made Mrs. Lee's heart thrill as she left them to telephone to Mr. Lee.

"I only wish I might attend the court of such a ruler always—as a faithful knight," Dr. Stuyvesant replied jestingly, but with such a serious expression in his eyes as he looked at her that Mis' Beauty blushed.

"And whither away then, good knight?" she asked gayly.

"Back to the battlefield of life; to New York in plain English, and I don't want to go one bit! I'm thoroughly converted to the charms of the South, and I feel very little enthusiasm at the prospect of starting home to-night."

"To-night! Are you really going to-night?" cried Marjory, startled; then stopped, rather confused, for Dr. Stuyvesant was gazing at her with a singular expression in his fine, dark eyes and she felt her own drop before them. Was it her fancy that gave them that wistful gaze? But she recovered herself immediately and frankly gave him her hand in farewell.

"How can I ever thank you for all you have done?" she said with the sweet sincerity which was one of her greatest charms. "You have done *so* much. Thanks seem far too inadequate."

"You can reward me," said the doctor quietly,—"if you will."

"How?" asked Mis' Beauty honestly.

"By telling me to come down to see you as soon as I can snatch a few days away again. Will you—Mis' Beauty?"

"Indeed I will. You will have to do that. I shall want you to see how well I can walk then."

"I don't want to come professionally next time," said the doctor. "But I do want to see you walk. And do you know where? It would make me very happy if I could see you walking—walking with me—down there—in the old rose garden. May I come?"

"The princess will always give her knight an audience," answered Mis' Beauty in a

voice that trembled, despite heroic efforts to make it steady.

His eyes glowed. He raised Mis' Beauty's unresisting hand to his lips, and stood erect just as Mrs. Lee came joyously into the room.

"Well, you two must be discussing something very interesting," she interposed lightly. "What is all this earnest conversation about?"

"I was just asking your daughter if I might come to see her when she begins to walk," answered the doctor frankly. "As I told her, I want to see her again—very much indeed."

"Most certainly, Dr. Stuyvesant. And Marjory will be very glad, I know. We run 'an accommodation bo'din' house,' to quote Cookie, for our friends, and you know we count you among them. Seriously, Mr. Lee and I feel that we owe you a debt too great for words. I don't know how we can ever repay all your kindness."

"Perhaps I can tell you a way—sometime—Mrs. Lee," rejoined the doctor quickly, looking into Marjory's eyes as he spoke.

"Humph!" muttered Cookie, who had witnessed the scene from the doorway. "He look at Mis' Beauty jes' like he were an eye-doctor, 'stead of one treatin' her back. I reckon he ain't gwine pay much 'tention to her back nohow, now he's gittin' so interested in her optical delusionmints. Well, hit sho' do beat all, how folks goes huntin' fer trouble! Dey say 'troubles never is single,' so I reckon dat's how come two folks, wid a trouble apiece, hitches up togedder an' makes jes' one big trouble. 'Mis'ableness needs fellership,' as Mr. Bonaparte Jackson is always a-sayin' to me, but jes' 'cuse me from sharin' nobody's troubles but my own. Law, I sho' is thankful to be single, an' outer danger, I sho' is!"

CHAPTER VII

"GOOD mornin', Mis' Beauty!" Mammy put in a black head and looked sharply around the room to make sure no one else was there. Coming in, she sidled up to Marjory, who was walking slowly about the room looking at her beloved plants now in full bloom. "Lawdy, honey, it sho' am gran' to see yer a-walkin' 'bout by yer lonesome se'f dis way! Now jes' wouldn't Marse Parable be puffed-to-death to see yer, tho!"

"Yes, I guess he would be proud, Mammy; I wrote him about walking out in the garden two days ago."

"Yer doan say so! Well, I reckon he'll be happy fer sho' now to know he done snatched yer outen Abraham's bosom. But, honey," she ejaculated, looking at Mis' Beauty more closely; "yer ain't been cryin', sho'ly?"

"Yes, I have," Mis' Beauty whispered, as the tears started to her eyes again. "I've just heard about Daddy's losing his money, and how you have to live with Mrs. Page now instead of us. Oh, Mammy, I feel as though it were my fault—my illness has cost so much!"

"Who tole yer dat lie?—me a livin' at de Pages!" broke in Mammy. "I ain't doin' no sich thing; I'se a-livin' heah!" she declared valiantly, true to her promise to keep the truth from Mis' Beauty.

Mis' Beauty shook her head sadly. "Oh Mammy, who's lying now? I know all about it, so you don't have to keep the secret any longer. I asked Dear-dear, and she told me everything."

"Well, who tole *her,* I'd jes' like to know," Mammy blustered, still trying to pretend that she was telling the truth; "fer ef hit's ennybody under my disposition I'se gwine to beat de stuffin's outen dem, I sho' is. Tellin' yer sich trash, till you mighty

nigh got nervious procrastination! I doan see what some folks always is a-wantin' to be tattle-tale-tittin' nohow fer!" she said indignantly.

Mis' Beauty took the faithful black hands in hers. "I had to know some time, Mammy, you know," she said smiling piteously; "but it does distress me to have been a burden so long. I'm thankful I don't need a nurse any more. And I'm getting so well and strong I ought to be able to help in some way!"

"Law, chile, doan yer talk dat way, 'kase yer already do he'p de worl' to be more beautifuller jes' by havin' yer remains in it. So yer jes' set down dar an' pacify yerse'f while I makes up yer bed an' rassels roun' dis room. Dar jes' natu'ally ain't nothin' I loves to do like I does waitin' on you, whinever Mis' Page gimme any sparce momints; an' honey," bustling about as she talked, "I'se got a letter I wants yer to read fer me."

COOKIE

"Of course, Mammy. I'll read it now if you like."

"No'm, not jes' now I reckon, thankee, fer here's Mis' Averett a-comin'." Mis' Beauty raised her head eagerly as Cookie entered.

"A letter for *me,* Cookie?"

"Said Bre'r Rabbit to Marse Elefant a-lookin' him in de face: 'Does yer own a trunk?'" Cookie quoted sarcastically. "Law, honey, ef yer ax de composer of all dem letters as many foolish questions as yer axes me, yer'll know too much 'bout him to *have* him when he pop de question," she concluded, handing Mis' Beauty her daily letter from New York and hurrying out again.

"Chile," said Mammy comfortingly, "doan yer let Cookie disencourage yer. She's a puffect cylinder, an' doan believe in nothin'. But I'se pathetic, I is, so jes' you read yer letter, den do me de favormint of a-readin' mine." Whereupon she walked over to the long pier glass, which always at-

tracted her, and gazed critically at herself, turning round and round to get every possible viewpoint.

Mis' Beauty finished her letter and looked up. A very tender light shone in her gray eyes and the loveliest shadow of a smile lingered on her lips. She looked at Mammy, at first unseeingly; then as she became conscious what Mammy was doing, she smiled frankly with amusement, restraining a laugh with difficulty, and asked:

"What in the world are you doing, Mammy?"

"I'se jes' gittin' a bird-eye view of my figger, Mis' Beauty; does you t'ink I shows my two hun'ed poun's?"

"Why no, I don't think you do, Mammy. I never would have guessed you weigh so much."

"Dat jes' com-figgers wid what all my gemman-frien's says," Mammy answered delightedly, "fer dey says, 'Law, Mis' Richardson, you got de deceivingest meat!' Is

yer ready ter read my letter now, honey? All right, heah 'tis," pulling an unopened envelope from her stocking.

"Dear Mis' Richardson," read Mis' Beauty. "Wife dat has been, an frin to bee, i seets misef pin in han to rite you a fue lines as yu no hits haard fer me to do, tho i kin reed an rite beter dan sum kin. Enclosed you will find a miniture of myself, and if it but serves to recall me to your memory, the skill of the artist will not have been exercised in vain." (Here a pictured hand with a dove perched on the forefinger, and holding a snow scene, was pinned to the letter.) "I had hoped to bid you a fond farewell, dear lady, but my sudden call to other fields has rendered it impossible. So I go to battle with your beautiful image in my heart,

To fight for my country and thee,
And if I should fall,
On God I will call,
For blessings on my country and thee, dear.

i am sindin you sum lovly unions Out the gawdin.
Yer deer Ole man Mr. Shoodyvon Richardson."

"Now ain't dat jes' gran'!" exclaimed Mammy. "Ain't it gran' tho'! I jes' natu'ally takes store by dat wordin', fer hits so sinmintal an' high flutin' hit makes my heart feel right ticklish, it sho' do. But hit do beat all what permiscious taste Uncle Shoddy is got, a seelectin' de ve'y letter outen Mr. Jackson's letter-writer book I'se mos' fondes' of." She stood for a moment, the letter clasped to her breast, as she and Mis' Beauty silently looked out into the garden. "Now here comes dem chillens, of co'se! Dey never will 'low me to reckomember dat we'se gals togedder! Git out o' here, yer—"

"No, no, Mammy, don't send them away. I promised to teach them the 23rd Psalm for to-morrow. Come on in, dears," as the three

little Lees and Black Mat came tumbling into the room, falling all over each other in their effort to be the first in. "But don't shove and push so. There's plenty of time. Now, sit here on the floor near me. That's right!" as they scrambled into a half circle about her chair. "Now, Mis' Cleveland, I'll begin with you. Do you think you can remember it from yesterday?"

"Of course," scornfully answered Mis' Cleveland. "I'm no baby! Ask one of the kids first," nodding toward Brother and Little Sister.

"If you ask me," volunteered Brother, "I'll run up in the Ding-Dong!"

"Why, Brother, don't you want to say it? It's such a nice Psalm!"

"Naw, I don't. I wanter hear some stories 'bout lions, and tigers, and firemen!"

"I wanter hear stories too," piped Little Sister.

"Well," put in Mis' Beauty pacifyingly.

"I'll tell you a story afterward, but now I want you to say the Psalm."

"Law, Mis' Beauty, lemme say it," pleaded Black Mat, rolling her eyes excitedly, and jumping up.

"All right, Black Mat; you say it then, if the others won't."

Black Mat made a low bow and started, tugging at her stocking that was always hanging down. Mammy stood in their midst, proudly smiling, as Black Mat began to recite:

"De Lawd am de Sheperd—I shall not want—He makey me lie—Down in green pastures he restorey my soul—an' leadey me side de still waters—Ya, doe I walks thu de valleys of the Shadows of Death I will fear no Devil for he is with me—"

"I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me," corrected Mis' Beauty.

"Fer thou ark wid me," went on Black Mat complacently. "Dye rod an' dye staff comfortable me—"

"Comfort me, Black Mat."

"Comfort me,"—hesitated the pickaninny. "Comfort me—"

"Well, what comes next? Can't you think of it?"

"Yas'm, I kin think of hit, but I jes' disremember what hit is right now."

"Thou spreadest—"

"Oh yes, now I reckomembers. "Dou spready vittels as presents fer de folks I doan like an' po'ed ker'sene on my haid till my cup hits so full hit ain't gwine hole no mo'," declared Black Mat triumphantly, while the teacher and Mis' Cleveland burst into laughter.

"Humph, I doan see nothin' so funny 'bout de twenty-threed Sam!" she said indignantly, hurt at Mis' Beauty's merriment, and insulted that Mis' Cleveland should laugh at her. "Hush up yer mouf, Mis' Clevelan'," she exclaimed, losing her temper completely as Mis' Cleveland continued to giggle. A vigorous slap given

Mis' Cleveland resounded through the room.

"Hush up yourself," said Mis' Cleveland, slapping back. "It was funny, the way you said it."

"It warn't neither!"

"Children, children, ar'n't you ashamed!" cried Mis' Beauty, as Mammy sprang to the rescue and gave each child a shake, saying threateningly: "Yer's bof got settin' positions dat's jes' itchin' fer a cowhide, an' dey'll git hit too ef yer doan look out! Listen what Mis' Beauty's a-sayin' to yer!"

Mis' Beauty bent reproachful eyes on the combatants. "This is dreadful, children. Don't you know that God sees you when you act this way, and writes it all down in a big book?"

The children were silenced and sat awe-stricken about her at such a revelation.

"Yes," Mis' Beauty went on, encouraged at the impression she was making. "And the Devil sees you too, and *he* writes it down

in a book, for all the bad children belong to him, and he is always on the lookout for some, and so when he can write any new names in his Bad book, he knows he's going to get some more bad children, and is glad."

Black Mat's eyes seemed about to burst from her head. Edging closer, she asked plaintively:

"You say de Lawd he see me when I slaps Mis' Clevelan'?"

"Yes, Black Mat, he saw you."

"An' yer say de Devil he see me too, Mis' Beauty?"

"Yes, he saw you too."

"Well—Mis' Beauty—" with a very puzzled and uneasy frown.

"Yes?"

"What I wants to know is, what's de Lawd doin' a-keepin' company wid de Devil?" she asked shrewdly.

"Oh, Black Mat!" exclaimed Mis' Beauty, really shocked. "You are incorrigible!"

"Yas'm, she sho' is incorrigated," assented Mammy, who repeated every big word she heard as nearly as possible. "But she doan git hit from me, fer I'se a good deal more even-tempered dan her Pa was. Now her Pa were—"

"Heah, what's all dis confuss 'bout?" interrupted Cookie, appearing with a telegram in her hand. "Honey, heah's a 'lectric shock fer yer," she continued, handing it to Mis' Beauty. Then turning to the group of children she added forcibly: "Look heah, what all you chillens doin' in heah a-wearin' Little Mis' to a frazzle? Git out, ev'y detailed one of you, wid your noise an' omnibusses! Git, I say!" And they "got," as they always did when Cookie commanded. "Mis' Richardson, you oughten to 'lowed dem in heah, nohow!" Then she turned and said,

"I hope hit ain't no misfortunate news, Mis' Beauty—"

"Oh no, Cookie; it's from Dr. Stuyvesant, saying he will be here on Monday."

"Oh, is yer back wusser agin, my po' chile!" cried Mammy, alarmed.

"No, Mis' Richardson," answered Cookie grimly. "He's gwine give her eyes some mo' starin' treatmints, I reckon."

Mis' Beauty looked in amusement from one to the other, and shook her head gayly. "You're both wrong. He's coming for his own health this time. Dr. Stuyvesant has a bad case of heart trouble, and this climate helps it," she assured them, smiling to herself at her own device. Then, as they left the room, she opened her folded telegram again. It read:

"Letter received. Congratulations. May I walk there with you Monday evening?

"R. S."

CHAPTER VIII

UNCLE SHODDY was at the barn. It was the day of Dr. Stuyvesant's expected arrival, and the bony gray mare was being put into her harness when the children appeared.

"Let *us* hitch up, Uncle Shoddy?" begged Mis' Cleveland.

"Can't to-day, chillens. Hit's extraly pawticler to-day, 'kase I'se gwine to meet Marse Parable."

"Well, we promise to do it extra particular; besides, we can do it as well as you can anyhow. Be good and go on 'bout your business, Uncle Shoddy, and leave us to harness. We'll do it all right," half commanded, half pleaded Mis' Cleveland.

"Well," said Uncle Shoddy helplessly, giving in as usual to the children whom he secretly worshipped. "Aw-right, baby-

chile, aw-right." He chuckled as he disappeared into the sunny depths of his garden. "Lee chillens is de fines' chillens anywhar, I tells yer," he announced to the flowers as he went slowly about his beloved task of tending them.

"Now we can fix her up fine!" exclaimed Mis' Cleveland enthusiastically, adjusting parts of the harness as she talked. "I declare, I believe I'll run a livery stable when I get grown."

"I believes I will, too," chimed Brother and Little Sister in one breath.

"Oh, no, you all can't," crossly replied Mis' Cleveland. "There wouldn't be anybody to ride then. You'll have to think of something else to be. Brother, why don't you be president of the United States? Girls can't be that."

"All right; I will," pleasantly agreed Brother.

"Or maybe, you'd rather be a missionary to China?"

"Yes, I will."

"But you can't be both, Goosie!"

"Why not?"

"Oh, Brother, you ask such silly things! Here, Black Mat, I'll let you do her mane and tail if you want to."

"I'll wrop hit like Mammy do mine, Mis' Clevelan', ef yer'll gimme de ribbin offen yourn an' Little Sister's haid."

"Why, that will look splendid!" cried Mis' Cleveland, snatching the red bow from her own hair and the blue one from Little Sister's. "And I tell you what I'll do," as a brilliant thought crossed her mind. "I'll paint some flowers or something on her to match!"

"Lawd, Mis' Clevelan', I believes you is as smart as Marse Solomen," announced Black Mat admiringly. "I declar' I do!"

"Now, Brother, you and Little Sister run get me Sister Lee's paints; but don't let Cookie see you!"

They rushed away for the paints, while

Mis' Cleveland and Black Mat continued to bedeck old Virginia, who looked around occasionally, as if wondering what was going on. She had passed the age to wonder much about anything, however, so she stood philosophically, and accepted her unknown fate with a pleasing submission.

"Here's the paints," called the returning children in chorus. "Let *us* squeeze 'em?"

"All right; but just squeeze the red and blue—right here on this board; that's enough." Mis' Cleveland dug her brush in the mess of paint, and stood thinking.

"Whar yer gwine paint her, Mis' Clevelan'?" eagerly questioned Black Mat.

"Right across her sides, I reckon."

"Looks to me like she pow'ful po' an' uneven to paint on. What kind of figgermints yer gwine paint?"

"Let's see," mused Mis' Cleveland thoughtfully. "What do you think would look the prettiest, flowers or letters?"

"I thinks letters, Mis' Clevelan'," Black

Mat answered after a moment of deep thought.

"Yes, I reckon they would; besides I really paint letters better. Oh, I know! I have a lovely idea! She's so thin it would be awfully funny, and I can have some words to welcome him on the other side."

"What?" chorused the others, prancing around Virginia and Mis' Cleveland like Indians.

"Just you wait and see," ordered Mis' Cleveland, shaking out her brush and taking a generous dab of paint. "Virginia's ticklish, I reckon," she added, as the mare's sides quivered under the reckless strokes of the stiff brush, and she began to move restlessly.

"Hole still dar, Virginny!" commanded Black Mat, giving the reins a jerk. "Ain't yer got sinse 'nough to wanter be a picter?"

"Feed her your candy, kids," advised Mis' Cleveland. "I'll have her finished in a minute"; so Brother and Little Sister

yielded every other bite of their peppermint sticks without a murmur.

"There, I'm done; now look!" exclaimed the artist proudly, stepping aside to give the others a better view. There, in large letters of blue and red, reaching clear across Virginia's sides, stood the words: *"Oats wanted. Inquire within."*

"Lawd, ain't dat jes' gran'," giggled Black Mat. "You sho' is a good sign painter, Mis' Clevelan'."

"Yes, I think it is rather good myself," modestly announced the successful artist. "I'm going to paint 'Welcome' on her other side; it won't take but a minute. There, she's all ready. Uncle Shoddy! Oh, Uncle Shoddy!" she called from the doorway, "Virginia's hitched!"

"Aw-right, I'se a-comin'," he answered, hurrying to the barn. "Lawd have mussy, Mis' Clevelan,' what yer done to dat hoss? She look like a nightmare," chuckling at his own joke, "or a Mardy-graw or somethin'!"

"But ain't she fine, Uncle Shoddy?" urged Mis' Cleveland.

"Well, yas'm; fer dem dat likes deckomrated hosses, I reckon she be," he doubtfully assented. "But 'pears to me Mis' Beauty—"

"Don't you *dare* tell Sister Lee, or Cookie, or anybody," commanded Mis' Cleveland, her face flaming as she thought of what Dear-dear and Marjory would say. "If you do, I'll never write any more poetry for you to send Mammy, nor letters, nor nothing. So there now! You just drive down to the depot. Dr. Stuyvesant will like her that way I know, and she's decorated 'specially to welcome him!"

"Yas'm," meekly answered Uncle Shoddy, as he clambered in and drove the patient Virginia dutifully out the back gate.

. . .

"Oh!" gasped Marjory, sitting on the porch with Mrs. Lee, to await the arrival of their visitor. "Look, Dear-dear! What in

the world is the matter with Virginia?"

The mare came ambling up the road. Dr. Stuyvesant was laughing so heartily that he was almost falling out of the buggy. Uncle Shoddy was driving, his face as serious as when he preached a Sunday sermon. Mis' Beauty stared at the mare, at the doctor, and at Uncle Shoddy. "Just look!" she exclaimed once more.

Mrs. Lee gave a quick glance, then began to laugh. "The little scamps," she said, guessing the truth at once. "But it is funny, Marjory; you'll have to admit it's funny!"

"Well, it's just a little too funny, I think, and I'd like to spank Mis' Cleveland," replied Marjory, on the verge of hasty tears. But the sight of Virginia's decorated flanks was too much for her, and she suddenly burst into unrestrained laughter, joined by Dr. Stuyvesant as he ran up the steps and took her hand in greeting.

"My, but the Princess sent a gorgeously

arrayed steed to meet me this time," the doctor laughed. "Virginia seems to be getting gay in her old age, to say the least of it. Well, she doesn't look any gayer than I feel at being here again!" He shook hands with Mrs. Lee and Marjory again from pure lightness of heart. "I don't blame you Southerners for calling this God's country. Such weather! Such beautiful —scenery—!" looking swiftly at Mis' Beauty.

"Come right in, Dr. Stuyvesant," said Ole Mis', hospitably leading the way. "We've given you the same old room, so you won't feel homesick." She smiled, as she turned her head to look at him as he followed her to the door.

"Let's see if you can walk as well as you've been pretending to this physician of yours," he said gently, standing aside to let Marjory pass.

She raised her gray eyes to his for a fleeting second.

"Oh, yes. Didn't you believe me? Just see!"

"Bravo!" he cried in elation at the quick little steps, taken freely and courageously with never an instant of uncertainty or fear. "Little girl," striding to her side, "I'm proud of you! I am indeed!"

"You have a right to be," said Mis' Beauty. "I owe you a large, large debt."

"Don't put it that way, Mis' Beauty. I'd rather feel in your debt, as I do. I wonder whether you have forgotten your promise?"

Mis' Beauty flushed and said, "What promise do you mean?"

Dr. Stuyvesant drew very near to her side.

"The promise you made me to walk in the rose garden with me this evening," he said very gravely now. "Will you—Princess?"

Mis' Beauty's lovely smile flashed out in assent.

"Good!" he said happily. "After supper I shall claim its fulfillment. And after—"

"Lawdy, here's Marse Parable," cried Cookie. "Howdy, sah? Yer won't be as welcome in Heaven as yer is in de boosom of dis fambly, sah, yer sho' won't! We'se jes' bustin' glad to see yer!"

"Amen!" came in a burst of fervor from Uncle Shoddy and Mammy as they joined the little procession which had unconsciously formed to accompany the young doctor to his room.

CHAPTER IX

SOBS, screams and moans came stridently through the library window where Ole Marse and Ole Mis' were sitting, enjoying the fresh cool air that floated in. Ole Mis' jumped up at the unusual noise and called hurriedly to her husband, dreaming peacefully over his book.

"Oh, Bob, listen! Some one must be hurt. Look! What is that?"

Two men, apparently bearing a stretcher between them, drew near the window, while the shrieks and groans continued.

"Run for the doctor, Bob. There has been an accident. He and Marjory are in the garden!"

Ole Marse ran out the door leading to the rose garden, while Ole Mis' rushed out the front door, and down the steps to the drive, calling,

"What is it? Who's hurt?"

"Lawdy, Mistis," came Uncle Shoddy's voice from out the darkness. "Doan yer git *ex*cited. Nobody ain't hurt. Hit's jes' Mammy. She's done got 'ligion an' come th'ugh."

"Oh, I'se got de Lawd Jesus! I'se got de Lawd Jesus!" chanted Mammy; then moaned and groaned, "Glory-Hallelujah-in-de-Lamb!"

"She's been a backslider, Mistis, yer know, but praise Gawd, my sermon done fetched her back into de fole agin to-night. She's been in a trance, so we'se had to take 'er home on dis heah winderblin', 'kase hit's so cole I'se feared to leave 'er in de meetin'-house all night."

"I'se got de Lawd Jesus! I'se got de Lawd Jesus! Halle—"

"Now look here, Mammy," said Ole Mis' peremptorily, shaking the fat form as it lay stretched out and lopping over on the window blind. "You've just got to hush this noise!"

"I'se got de Lawd Je—"

"Hush! Hush, I say, Mammy, hush this minute. You'll rouse the neighborhood and scare everybody almost to death, as you did me."

"Law, honey," whispered Mammy in a low, quick tone. "I'se in a trance and can't hush. I doan even know what yer's sayin'. I'se got de Lawd Jesus—Hallelujah! I'se—"

"What's the trouble? Someone hurt?" breathlessly inquired Dr. Stuyvesant, who, obeying the summons of Ole Marse, had rushed up from the garden while her father led Marjory to the House.

"No, no, Dr. Stuyvesant," said Mrs. Lee reassuringly. "I'm not surprised at your being alarmed, but Uncle Shoddy says it's only Mammy 'gittin' 'ligion—comin' th'ugh.' "

"My dear madam, what is that?" asked he seriously, completely nonplussed at the scene and its explanation. He looked

sharply at Mammy who still continued to moan and groan.

"Religion? Oh, I thought some of you New Yorkers knew," laughed Mrs. Lee teasingly.

"If this is it, we don't."

"No, I reckon not, Dr. Stuyvesant. Only our darkies have this kind."

"I'se got de Law—"

"Mammy, be still, I tell you! I won't have this noise any more. Take her around to her old room for to-night," to the men carrying her, "and get her quiet as quickly as possible."

Dr. Stuyvesant turned to Mrs. Lee, and asked, "Do you think some aromatic-ammonia or something of the sort would help quiet the poor soul? She really seems to be suffering from hysteria."

"No indeed," said Mrs. Lee. "Mammy would have a grudge against you always, if you quieted her now. She wouldn't be a church member of good and regular stand-

ing if she didn't 'come th'ugh' just this way. But let us go in. I'm afraid Marjory may feel nervous, though she has probably guessed the trouble by now."

"How long does it generally take to 'come th'ugh,' " the doctor questioned curiously.

"Oh, she'll be all right in the morning. You won't be able to tell she has 'come th'ugh' by then."

Marjory came forward to meet them as they entered the library. "Well?" she queried, smiling at Dr. Stuyvesant. "What do you think of Mammy's way of 'gittin' 'ligion,' my Yankee friend?"

"It's extraordinary; most extraordinary!" commented the doctor; while they all laughed at his thoughtful, puzzled face.

"I guess you aren't very familiar with the religious customs of our 'leisure class,' " remarked Mr. Lee. "They're curious enough to strangers, though we expect nothing else from some of our negroes.

They 'git 'ligion' at intervals all through their lives."

Dr. Stuyvesant nodded courteously, though he was hardly listening. His eyes had flown to Mis' Beauty's sparkling, radiant face, and as their eyes met hers fell before the ardor of his. The doctor stepped forward.

"Little Princess," he softly questioned, looking deep into those earnest gray eyes. "May I tell them our secret now?"

For answer, she slipped her hand in his. The doctor turned.

"Mr. Lee, Marjory and I have something to say. We—we—" there was a perceptible hesitation, and then the words came with a rush. "We love each other very much—don't we, dear?" taking her other hand as she blushed and nodded a shy assent—"and we want you to give your consent to our marriage."

"Oh, Marjory, is this true, child?" exclaimed her mother, drawing her to her arms.

"I'm afraid it is, Dear-dear."

"But you are so young!"

"Only two years older than you were, honey," said Mis' Beauty, composedly, though giving her mother a shy glance.

"So you are; so you are!" chimed in Ole Marse; "but it doesn't seem possible, little girl. Well, you have my consent,"—his voice broke as he took her slender hand and placed it in that of her lover. "I believe," he said gravely, "that you'll always be as good to her as you've been ever since we've known you, and that's saying enough to satisfy even me. God bless you both."

"I'se got de Lawd Jesus! I'se got de Lawd Jesus!" floated faintly in through the open windows, as Mammy gave one last religious outburst before succumbing to slumber.

"Like Mammy," said Dr. Stuyvesant, smiling tenderly on his beloved, "I've 'come th'ugh,' too; but I've got an angel!"

CHAPTER X

THE news of Marjory's betrothal to the New York doctor who had saved her life in the train wreck, had not yet been made public on the plantation; but Ole Mis' passing by the kitchen door, and seeing Cookie within, paused to give her the news, for she knew how that loyal heart would rejoice at the thought of Mis' Beauty's happiness. She ran lightly up the steps and entered, before Cookie heard her coming. Once within the kitchen, Mrs. Lee paused in dismay.

Cookie, always cheerful and ironical, was sitting disconsolately in a chair, her busy hands folded in her lap and tears streaming unheeded down her cheeks. Mrs. Lee, greatly concerned, at once sought to learn what was the trouble.

"What on earth is the matter, Cookie?"

she demanded in real distress, for Cookie's emotions were usually under iron control. "What has happened?"

Cookie wiped her eyes with a wet handkerchief, subdued her features to a comparative state of calm, stood up and answered her mistress respectfully.

"Law, Ole Mis', he done ax me!"

"Who asked you? Asked what?"

"Marse Parable," said Cookie vehemently, bursting into tears again. "He done ax me to let him be financiered to Mis' Beauty. Said you an' Ole Marse done 'sented, but dat she say he got to git my condescension too."

"And what did you say?" asked Mrs. Lee, her eyes wet now at this token of Marjory's love for her old servitor.

"I tole him, yes'r, he could have her ef she were fool 'nough to go. Den I didn't want to seem too grumptious, so I said dat I reckon ef he'd been a black gemman I'd been fool 'nough to marry him myse'f."

Mrs. Lee's laugh rang out. She was aware that Cookie could have given no better sign. "And what did Dr. Stuyvesant say to that?" she queried.

Cookie wagged her head dolefully. "He seemed to 'preciate de regard of my consideration an' shooken hands. He's pretty well-mannered ef he do come from Philameyork. He's Yankee Quality, I reckon. But it do hurt dis ole nigger's heart to giv' up little Mis' Beauty, hit sho' do."

"Yes, I know it does," said Mrs. Lee, her own eyes full. "Sometimes I think I just can't give her up!" She dropped into the nearest chair with such a desolate expression that Cookie was roused to action.

"Now look here, doan yer start no sheenanikin," she commanded, drying her eyes at once and looking indignant. "Fer ef de Lawd done annointed dat yo' chile shall be financiered an' married also, den yer ain't got no right to 'kick agin de pickles,' as de Good-Book say. You better praise Him

from whom all blessin's flood, dat she had sinse 'nough to pick out a idol 'stead of some no-count dudey-dandy wid no *ex*-peeance to his back! Come out on de po'ch. I jes' heard Mis' Beauty circumnavigatin' dat way, an' I feel hit encumbering upon me to giv' her my confirmations!"

Cookie stepped grandly out on the side porch, and Mrs. Lee followed. Dr. Stuyvesant sat on the steps, fanning himself, while Mis' Beauty had dropped into a rustic seat just above. She looked so radiant that her mother gazed at her with a sort of serious wonder. But Cookie had the field, and Cookie was not one to shirk duty.

"Good mornin', Mis' Beauty. I was jes' a-tellin' yer Ma dat I done gived Marse Parable my condescention, an' now I'se come to giv' you my confirmations."

"Thank you, Cookie dear." Little Mis' Beauty, out of sheer lightness of heart, sprang up from her seat, and running to

Cookie gave her a childish hug. "I know you want me to be happy."

"Lawdy yes, honey; I sho' does; an', honey—"

"Yes, Cookie?"

"Heah's somethin' I wants yer to have," taking out a battered ring of ancient workmanship from the bosom of her dress. She took Marjory's hand and slipped it upon her finger.

Mis' Beauty looked surprised. "What is this, Cookie? You want to give me this ring?"

"Yes, chile. I guess hit doan seem likely to you now dat I ever were a gal myse'f, an' dat I were a fool 'bout a nigger jes' like you is 'bout Marse Parable; but I were, an' dis am de ring he gimme. I loved dat no-count rascal," she continued more sadly and softly than Mis' Beauty had ever heard her speak. "We was goin' to git married jes' like white folks, when I foun' out he had two wives already."

"Oh, poor Cookie!" Mis' Beauty's soft heart was touched. In the light of her own happiness, the tale seemed tragic. "Poor Cookie!" she exclaimed again.

"Law, honey!" Cookie became her cynical self at once. "Doan yer waste yer heart on me; hit's a pow'ful good thing I diskivered dat nigger were black clean through 'fore I married him like all dese females dat's supportin' gemmans dat ain't wuth it. But dat ring now, I wants you to hav' it, 'kase it were supposeded to stan' fer true love de fust time, but didn't, an' dis time it will, baby-chile, ef I gives it to you."

Mis' Beauty blushed adorably with her eyes on her lover's. "It surely has come to the right place now, Cookie," she said softly. "I'll keep it always."

Mrs. Lee stepped off the porch, leaving Dr. Stuyvesant and Mis' Beauty together. She passed down the wide walk with a searching gaze bent upon the distant gar-

den. As she drew nearer, Uncle Shoddy loomed into view, and the sight of him recalled her wandering thoughts.

"Uncle Shoddy," she asked quietly; "why didn't you nail up that broken fence as I told you? It doesn't do any good to drive Mrs. Jones's chickens home, unless you fix it so they can't come back again."

"Yas'm, Mistis, but arter I druv dem chickens home yestiddy, dey didn't look like dey was a-studyin' 'bout comin' back agin, so I didn't see no use takin' up my visible time a-mendin' dat rail. Howsomever, I did take de precaution of puttin' up dis sign"—turning a huge board toward Mrs. Lee that she might read. In large letters, written across its entire width, were the words:

"HENS, KEEP OUT"

"Uncle Shoddy, you're perfectly hopeless," said Mrs. Lee, wiping tears of laughter from her eyes. "Go and harness Vir-

ginia now. Dr. Stuyvesant wants to take your Little Mis' driving. Did the turpentine take the paint off?"

"Mos' of hit, Mistis, an' I kivered up what didn't come off wid whitewash, so Virginny look mo' natu'aller to-day dan she did yestiddy."

"Well, when she's ready, drive her round to the side porch."

Mrs. Lee passed on up the garden path, and Uncle Shoddy proceeded leisurely to the barn. He found Virginia in fine fettle, industriously champing oats and swishing her turpentined and whitewashed flanks with her tail. Having harnessed her, he mounted the seat of the buggy and drove a little way, then stopped and waited. In a few moments Mammy appeared from her cabin beyond the magnolias, and laboriously ensconced herself in the seat at his side. So when Dr. Stuyvesant and Mis' Beauty looked up from an absorbing conversation on the side porch, it was to see Virginia ap-

pearing around the corner, followed by the buggy in which sat Uncle Shoddy and Mammy.

"Good mornin', chillens," beamed Mammy. "We'se jes' takin' a little drive togedder up from de barn."

Uncle Shoddy alighted; then gallantly handed Mammy out, and, hat in hand, led her to the steps.

"Lawdy, Mr. Richardson, you'se a puffect Winchester dis mornin', I declar' you is!" she said, beaming upon him.

"Humph," said Cookie who with the others had been standing silently watching them. "Deevorce deevelops manners in some famblies, I sees."

"Mis' Beauty an' Marse Parable, we'se just heard the good news from Mis' Averett, and we'se come to deliber up our greetin's, wishin' you a very merry weddin'—an' den also," said Mammy, coyly hanging her head, "we has somethin' to tell yer."

"Thank you, Mammy; we appreciate your

good wishes very much. Now what have you to tell us?"

Mammy hesitated, but only for an instant; then pride and glory prevailed. Giving the reluctant Uncle Shoddy a jerk which brought him to the front, she announced:

"Me an' Uncle Shoddy's engaged!"

"Engaged! Why, Mammy!" they all exclaimed.

"Yas'm, we sho' is," replied Mammy's radiant but embarrassed betrothed.

"I reckon yer is took breathless," said Mammy, "but I'se jes' natu'ally got to marry dis nigger to git rid of him. Hits gwine be pure as a lily," she continued, "wid de paraders all in white, an' Black Mat de made-on-her."

The audience seemed still speechless with surprise, so Mammy continued to describe the coming event. "Yas'm, hit sho' will be gran'; dat weddin' will; better dan enny of our weddin's, won't it, Uncle Shoddy?"

"Yas'm, hit sho' will," he grinned.

"Mis' Clevelan' wrote me out some invites dis mornin', so ef yer ain't got no scruples, I'll jes' giv' dis fambly deir's now."

"Why, of course, Mammy," said Ole Mis', who had reappeared on the porch in time to hear Mammy's announcement. "We would like to have ours now; but are you sure you two have made up enough to marry and not quarrel any more?"

"Law, honey, co'se we'll qua'l. Dar ain't nobody but puffect strangers dat doan qua'l, I reckon. What's de use of weddin's ef yer can't sass yer bridegroom now an' den? Here's yer invite," pulling an envelope from her stocking and handing it to Mis' Beauty. "Honey, you read it out loud."

"Dear friends and well-wishers," read Mis' Beauty amid delighted giggles from the group of children gathered in the background, "Your presence is required to attend the marriage of Mrs. Richardson to

Mr. Richardson on Oct. 20th. The honor of your presents will be ours.

"Mt. Zion Church."

"Ain't dat real white-folksy?" asked Mammy proudly. "I thunk hit up an Mis' Clevelan' jes' writ aroun' de thunk, dat's all she done."

"It'll be pretty soon, won't it?" laughed Dr. Stuyvesant.

"Yas'r, hit will. We doan believe in long ingagemints, sah!"

"Nor I, Mammy," he agreed with suspicious heartiness, looking at Mis' Beauty and Ole Mis', who were standing with their arms about each other.

"Uncle Shoddy gwine do ve'y han'som by me dis weddin'. He's gwine spen' ten dollars on my bridal-gif'—ain't yer, honey?"

"Yas'm, I is; hit's a good deal, but I reckon hit's wuth hit dis time."

"I owes dat much on my deevorcemint papers, and he gwine pay it off in compliment to me. Ain't yer, honey?"

"Yas'm. But you ain't tole dem," declared Uncle Shoddy to Mammy—"how hansom' yer done by me dis mornin' eider. "Yer gimme Black Mat for an ingagemint present—didn't yer?"

"Yas'm, I did," replied Mammy, smiling broadly, and evidently much pleased with herself for her stroke of genius. "Say, Mis' Averett—" suddenly wheeling round toward Cookie—"yer doan wanter have de marks of an' ole maid on yer grave, sho'ly! Why doan you an' Mr. Jackson jine de processional an' we'll have a doubled up twin weddin'!"

"Good Lawd!" exclaimed Cookie in horror. "Ef de Lawd's gwine be held reesponsible fer makin' two fools like you all is, I sho' pities him frum my bottom-dollar!"

"Well, jes' as you'se a mind to, Mis' Averett. T'ain't nothin' to me! But I hopes you'll come," she concluded, as the other engaged couple climbed into the buggy behind Virginia.

"I can accept for two of us, anyway," called back Dr. Stuyvesant. "Can't I, dear?"

"You certainly can," laughed Mis' Beauty.

As the buggy drove off, Mrs. Lee said: "I have some good news to tell too, Mammy, and I think it will give you extra joy."

"What am it, honey-chile?"

"There is a gentleman in the library now, signing a lease of that mountain property we've thought worthless so long. He says it is a coal mine, and he is paying your Ole Marse lots of money to be allowed to work it; so you can come back from the Pages and live with us after you are married."

"Oh Lawdy!" shouted Mammy joyously. "Sing-de-songs-of-Jubilee! Did yer hear dat gloriumfactious tidy, Uncle Shoddy? Whar de chillens? I wants to tell dem sooner dan at once, I sho' does. Glory Hallelujah!"

CHAPTER XI

ONE night, some three weeks later, Virginia, long since despoiled of paint and whitewash, stood patiently at the entrance to the Great House. She looked bonier and graver than usual, but her ears were cocked alertly to catch the sounds of laughter and bustle which floated through the open windows. Hurrying figures passed and repassed before them, and echoes of Dr. Stuyvesant's deep tones, as he answered some jest of Mis' Beauty's, caused the mare to paw the ground impatiently; for she had learned to know the owner of that voice and had sampled his largesse in generous measures of oats, oftener than Uncle Shoddy knew.

This was Uncle Shoddy's wedding eve, and every inmate of the Great House meant to attend it. Even Little Sister was per-

mitted to stay up for the occasion, and now when the family had settled itself in the roomy old carryall, Cookie and the three children were missing. Dr. Stuyvesant, about to descend and find the cause of the delay, stopped at the sight of the three small Lees, led by Cookie, running out of the door.

"Better hurry, chillens; de bride an' groom an' made-on-her done gone long time ago," commanded Cookie, urging her charges toward the waiting vehicle. "We'se sorry to kep' yer waitin' out under dis portfolier, Ole Mis', but we'se all ready now," as she and the trio of children climbed into the back seat.

"All aboard," called Dr. Stuyvesant, slapping Virginia smartly with the reins. "Here we go! But where is the church? Here I am playing coachman, and don't even know how to get there."

"Virginia do though," remarked Cookie from the back seat. "She got mo' sinse dan

some folks is, so you jes' trust to her an' de Lawd, Marse Parable, an' 'tween dem bof we oughter git dar somehow."

Marse Parable laughed. He found much to amuse him in this old Southern town where the cares and burdens of city life had slipped so easily from his shoulders. He had made good use of his time, and every man, woman and child on the plantation liked him, and bobbed a cordial greeting whenever he appeared.

"All right, Cookie," he said, "I guess you're right as usual, so I'll give Virginia her head."

The mare jogged along through the darkness without hesitation. After a few minutes' ride she brought up in front of the little church into which crowds of colored people were hurrying. The Lee party got out and ascended the steps.

"Why, there's Mammy in the doorway," exclaimed Mis' Beauty, spying the bride in full attire, welcoming each entering guest.

"Mammy, what are you standing here for?"

"Well, fust an' foremos' to part de speedin' guestes; sendin' dem dat's invited, in, an' dem dat ain't, out. Den too, I'se waitin' for de beckons to start my parade down to de pulpit; but de preacher ain't put in his disappearance yit, an' I'se gittin' pow'ful nervious, I sho' is!"

"Where's Uncle Shoddy?"

"He's a-squattin' down 'hind de organ; fer yer see, honey, dar ain't no vestrybule to dis church nor no place fer him to come santering out of to meet me when I starts down the island wid my consorts, unless he comes frum 'hind dat orgin. So he an' Napoleon Bonaparte Jackson is back dar till hits time to meet me. Den de music gwine bus' out, an' dey'll rise up, santer out, an' we'll exchange partners all, an' nobody'll think nothin' 'bout hit. Den Uncle Shoddy'll lead me to de pulpit, whilst de consorts takes situations behin' us. But I reckon you all better be gittin' in yer pew.

Dat's hit," pointing to the front row—"wid Little Sister's white sash tied on de end. Hits 'tirely preserved fer my fambly, so deir won't be no niggers to be a pushin' you. Heah you, Liberia," to a black girl standing just inside the door with a perfume atomizer in her hands—"doan waste yer vanilla on de Quality, but save hit fer dem what needs hit mo'."

"Humph!" sniffed Cookie, cynical, and none too well pleased at the attention the bride attracted. "Ef yer wants to outflavor dis congr'ation, Mis' Richardson, yer better use a pole-cat 'stead of perfume!"

The Lee family passed in without the redeeming spray of vanilla that was given to the other guests, and seated themselves within the white ribbons. There they sat—and sat; but no bridal party appeared. In the expectant stillness that followed their entrance, Uncle Shoddy's head rose up above the organ several times, stealing furtive peeps when he thought nobody was

looking, and vanished from view again; but the silence, broken only by much whispering, continued.

"What they waitin' for?" questioned Mis' Cleveland, who with Brother and Little Sister had been getting wiggles.

"Humph," muttered Cookie. "Mammy done come to her sinses again maybe, or dey's waitin' fer Jedgemint-Day to intercep'."

"The preacher hasn't come yet, dear," whispered Ole Mis', "but try to be still. It won't be very long. There! Uncle Shoddy's coming out now." For, becoming tired of his cramped position, Uncle Shoddy had arisen to his natural height behind the organ, while an expression of great relief played over his face. Mr. Jackson also rose, and having given the signal to Mammy to proceed, they whispered directions to the organist, and started their slow march toward the pulpit. A mighty noise, like the wind among dead leaves, filled the

church as Mammy stepped briskly down the aisle. She had lined her dress and Black Mat's with paper to make them rustle as the silk petticoats of the Quality did, and was delighted at the result.

"Lawdy, doan dat soun' like wealth an' lugzury?" in an undertone to Black Mat as she clung to her arm.

"Yas'm; hit sho' do," answered Black Mat, her eyes rolling in excitement, and every tooth in her head on display.

"Swish — rattle —swish—rattle—" went the paper linings as they marched.

"Ain't hit jes gran'?" switching in time with the music.

"Yas'm; hit sho' is," again agreed the maid-of-honor.

The two couples reached the pulpit together, Mammy taking Uncle Shoddy's arm, while Black Mat and Napoleon stepped behind.

"Whar's de preacher, Uncle Shoddy?" whispered Mammy.

" 'Pears he ain't come, honey, but doan let dat ferment yer. I'se tired a squattin', so I'se jes' gwine preform de ceremonies myse'f," he whispered back.

Turning toward the audience he said in his best Sunday voice:

"Bredderin, embracin' of de sisterin, I'se squatted jes' as long as I kin stan' it a-waitin' fer dat preacher, but," with a flourish of his hand "as he are not come as yit, I'se gwine marry us myse'f. I'se 'lowed dat pilgrimage by de law, an' dis church. I'se got de licenses in my pocket, so dar ain't no how-come dat I can't do hit as far as I sees. So all dat's in favormint of dis notion say 'I'—an' all dat's in disfavormint, say 'No!' "

The "I's" were unanimous, and carried the motion.

"Amen, den, I'se gwine do it. Mis' Sally Euphemia Desdimona Aurora-bo-Alice Richardson, I wants ter marry yer, an' I'se got all de implement nec'sary in my pocket; derefo' does yer take me fur better-

or-fer-wusser, for hot-an'-cold, fer sickness an' death, to have an'-to-hole as yer never-lastin' husban'?"

To which Mis' Richardson responded earnestly: "Yas'r, I does."

"An' does you, Mr. Shoddyvon Lafayette Cessero Richardson," addressing himself, "take dis woman to be yer awfully wedded wife, to cherry an' love, to honor an' repay, though sick unto death shall part?"

"Yas'r," he answered to himself. "I does."

"Has ennybody's presence got any impediment in deir speach, fer ef dey has an' doan speak now, den hole deir pieces fer ever mo', Amen.

"Mammy, I renounce you as my wife, an' myse'f as yer husban'—Mr. an' Mrs. Shoddyvon Richardson to de worl', Amen."

The music burst forth once more, and Uncle Shoddy with his blushing bride moved down the aisle toward the door, the bridal "consorts" following humbly behind.

"Good even', Mis' Averett," said Mr.

Jackson, pausing at the pew where Cookie sat. "Dis makes me feel pow'ful lonesome —lonesomer dan ever. Why doan yer marry me now while Uncle Shoddy's got his han' in?"

But Cookie glared and whispered fiercely: "You'se a fool nigger! Hurry an' git out so de Quality kin leave."

The "consorts" proceeded, and the others stood back respectfully to let the family from the Great House pass, while the bridal pair awaited them on the church steps.

"Congratulations, Mammy! Congratulations, Uncle Shoddy!" everybody said at once, and a general hand shaking followed.

"Thankee, Ole Mis'; thankee, Ole Marse; thankee, Mis' Beauty; thankee, honeys, one an' all!" beamed Mammy. Uncle Shoddy stood proudly but silently, admiring his reclaimed wife. In his joy he grinned broadly.

"Law, Mr. Richardson, ef yer grins much wider, yer'll split yer ears," remarked Cookie by way of greeting. "An' dat

would be a misfortune, it sho' would, 'kase ef I'se not pow'ful mistook yer'll be needin' dem to listen to de bride scole yer 'fore ve'y long."

Uncle Shoddy looked slightly embarrassed, but Mrs. Lee's coming up just then spoiled any retort he might have made. As he listened, however, a wave of joy obliterated the memory of the remark.

"Mammy," said Mrs. Lee, "you can invite your friends to your room, for Cookie and I have prepared some refreshments for them. So come on home, and have a real good time till midnight."

"Lawdy-Holy Lamb, Ole Mis', yer sho' is good to celebrate us like dat! Come on, Mr. Richardson an' suspected frien's," Mammy called in a loud and joyous voice so that all might hear: "Mis' Lee's prepared a weddin' supper, an' invites yer all to come. Lawdy, I sho' has enjoyed my weddin', an' now to have it wine up wid a deception! Hit seems jes' too gran' to be true!"

CHAPTER XII

THE day after Mammy's wedding Dr. Stuyvesant was obliged to return to New York, for his holiday was over. But before he left, Mis' Beauty had promised him that they should be married on Christmas Day. Three months seemed dreadfully long to him, but to Mis' Beauty, who had the important work of her trousseau to get ready, and who already had some pangs of homesickness at the thought of leaving her Southern home forever, the time seemed very short indeed.

Christmas Eve had now arrived, and with it Dr. Stuyvesant. They all spent the early evening about the big open fire of logs, where Mammy and the children were roasting corn and apples. After the children had gone up to bed the fun of decorating the Christmas-tree followed. Mis'

Beauty couldn't help but feel a lump rise in her throat as she realized that it was probably for the last time. Then they all went to their rooms for what was destined to be but a very few hours of sleep.

"Chrismus-gif', Ole Marse! Chrismus-gif', Ole Mis'!" cried Mammy, who was running from room to room in the Great House, pounding joyously upon each door.

"Christmas-gif'!" echoed Mis' Cleveland, Brother, Little Sister and Black Mat, running behind her, and pounding too.

Mammy's black face shone with excitement, and the children were prancing up and down half dressed, their hair flying and their eyes sparkling with expectation. Ole Marse and Ole Mis' were still in their rooms, for it was but five o'clock in the morning, but as it was Christmas morning, it made all the difference in the world. They smiled sympathetically as they heard Mammy's and the children's happy voices outside their door.

"Lawdy-goodness, ain't we peart a ketchin' eve'ybody like we is," Mammy chuckled. "Dar's Cookie, chillens, an' dar's Uncle Shoddy! Run, ketch dem!"

The children flew toward them. "Christ-mas-gif'!" they screamed again.

Uncle Shoddy halted, a broad smile overspreading his face. "Law," he asserted comfortably; "yer sho' ketch me as sudden as de Angel-of-Death gwine to, honeys. Dis yere's gwine be a great Chrismus!"

"Oh, I wish they'd hurry, so we'd know what we-all've gotten!" chorused the children, jumping about more wildly than ever.

Cookie then assumed control. "Heah, you chillens," she commanded; "git outer heah an' git some cloes on! Yer oughter be 'shamed yerse'fs a flyin' roun' wid no mo' on dan de Archiangels. Git! eve'y pussonel one of yer. Marse Parable'll think yer crazy actin' so combustible at five o'clock in de mornin'! Mammy, you oughter propelled dem stayin' in bed, an'

lullified dem, 'stead of reinforcin' dem when yer knows what excitement dis day gwine conceive."

Mammy shrugged her ample shoulders, her eyes roving for some one else to 'ketch' with her cry of "Chrismus-gif', and her face alight with the pleasure of the day. She drove the children out before her, just as Ole Mis' entered.

"Christmas-gif', Cookie," she called.

"Law, honey, is you up arter all? I'se jes been lecterizin' Mammy fer lettin' de chillens wake you-all."

"We're all up," said Ole Mis' cheerfully. "No one could possibly sleep when the children are abroad. Now come and help me light up, Cookie, and we'll have the tree."

"Yes'm, Ole Mis'," following her into the library. "Lawdy, ain't dat lubly? De fig-tree in de gyarden didn't look no mo' temptatious to Mis' Eve, I reckon."

A terrific pounding came on the library door. The children with Mammy had

gathered there in force, and the air was rent with their impatient beseechings. Ole Marse could be heard laughing outside, evidently trying unsuccessfully to quiet the rampant youngsters.

Cookie chuckled. "I'se lit my capers; is you, Ole Mis'? 'Kase dat do' gwine be busted th'u ef we doan let dem chillens in soon; dey souns' like sinners at de Golden Gate."

Mrs. Lee hurriedly lit the last candle. "Open the door," she told Cookie.

As soon as it was thrown open, the children with Ole Marse, Mammy, and Uncle Shoddy rushed in, the children squealing with delight as they saw the huge tree all a-twinkle.

"Where are Marjory and Dr. Stuyvesant?" demanded Ole Mis'.

"Why, she's puttin' on her pink naked-as-a-jay, honey," answered Mammy; "an' he's a-waitin' fer her. Says he can't walk in widout 'er!"

"Humph!" remarked Cookie; " 'pears to me he's gittin' pow'ful he'pless fer his build!"

"I reckon he's jes' skeerified to git in dis wile animule harum widout accompaniment," Mammy assured her; "fer all dis racket mus' soun' pow'ful strange ef yer ain't usen to a Quality Chrismus."

"Yas'm, it sho' mus'," agreed Uncle Shoddy.

When Mis' Beauty and Marse Parable finally hurried into the room the excitement redoubled, and Ole Mis' began taking presents from the tree, calling the names on each.

" 'From Cookie to Mis' Cleveland'—'Ole' Marse from Uncle Shoddy'—'Brother from Mammy.' Here are two envelopes hanging together; let's see," said Ole Mis', looking at the labels. "Oh, one for Cookie, and one for Mammy."

"Oh, Gawd, oh mussy, hit's money, Mis' Averett! Philameyork money, chile, made of nothin' but green paper!" cried Mammy,

peeping into the envelope as she flopped upon the floor, and rocked back and forth crooning over it and clasping it to her bosom.

"'In God we trust,
But gimme de dollars fust,'"

quoted Cookie when she had looked at hers. "Thankee, Marse Parable; thankee kin'ly, sah!"

"Law, yes, Marse Parable, gemman-of-de-Lawd, thankee kin'ly!" echoed Mammy, remembering her manners; and jumping upon her feet she seized his hand, pumping it up and down like a pump handle and curtsying the while.

"Law, look what Uncle Shoddy's got!" called some one.

"And just look what I've got!" cried the children together with shouts of glee.

"Mammy, Mammy, looker heah!" excitedly exclaimed Uncle Shoddy. "Marse Parable done guv' me raimints fitten fer Marse Solomen! Jes' look at dat long-

tailed nanny, will yer?" displaying a Prince Albert coat; "an' here's a stovepiper dat's sleek an' good as new! An' look at dese pants! Now ain't dey hallelujahs? Why, dey ain't even got de seat set shiney!"

"Look in the pockets," suggested Mis' Beauty, who had helped fix the box.

"Oh, look what Santa Claus has brought!" broke in the children.

"Money an' backy, sho' as I'se borned," beamed Uncle Shoddy. "Law, yer sho'ly is free an' ginrous to gimme so much! Hit doan cause yer no depravity I hopes?" somewhat anxiously. "What wid dese, an' all de presentamints frum de fambly, I'se rich as a Crocus, I sho' is," tears of gratitude shining in his eyes.

"Yas'r, yer sho is," added Mammy; "fer dey's twice as good as new, an'—"

"Oh, looker here at my doll eve'ybody," called Black Mat. "Ain't she lubly? I'se gwine name her Mis' Rosey-felt, 'kase she's so rosey."

"Oh, look at my doll too!" called Mis' Cleveland.

"Humph!" said Cookie ironically, as the group about Uncle Shoddy continued to examine his box; " 'pears to me dar'll be a deevorcemint agin on 'count of dressy flirtatiousness ef he wears dat Prince Edward, Mis' Richardson."

"Well, dar's condolemint in de fac' I *kin* git one agin ef he do git too cowkettish," cheerfully responded Mammy. "Little Sister, fer de Lawd's sake stop blowin' dat horn; you'se gittin' so tomboystrous I'se 'shamed of yer. Hit soun's like Kingdom's-come, an' Marse Gabriel a-blowin', adveetizin' de fac'."

"Oh, look, look what I've got now!"

"See what Mis' Beauty's got—ain't hit gran'!"

"Look, see what Ole Marse got—an' Ole Mis'—an' dar's some mo' passels!"

"Oh, Lawdy-goodness, ain't dis Chrismus a honey?" cried all the darkies. As Ole

Mis' continued to take present after present from the tree, a perfect Bedlam ensued. The children screamed, the darkies chuckled, and Mis' Beauty and Dr. Stuyvesant looked on with shining eyes. Finally when Ole Mis's arms fairly ached with distributing packages, a lull ensued and everybody sat down to examine their gifts in earnest.

"Now, Mis' Beauty," said Cookie, coming smilingly up to where she sat in a great arm chair; "all dis confuss is over, so yer better res', 'kase yer doan wanter to look like a hant dis evenin' a-spookin' down to de hitchin' pos' to git yerse'f entangled in de reins of matrimony. Yer mus' look joyous over gittin' yer a man whedder yer is or not, fer dat's part of de gamble; but nobody can't look joyous over nothin' ef deys nigger-haidedly sleepy; so yer better git all de nap-snatches yer kin dis mornin', yer sho' had!"

"You are surely right, Cookie," agreed Dr. Stuyvesant. "You had better lie down

for the rest of the morning, dear," he said, taking Mis' Beauty's hand and leading her gently from the room.

. . .

"Come in, Mis' Fitzhugh! Good evenin', Mis' Byrd! Yer'll find de udder guests dissemblin' in de parlor. Yas'm, de weddin' gwine be dar. Mammy's at de front do', to show yer to yer situations, jes' fer manners, for I reckon you Quality dat's been almos' borned on dese do'-steps doan need no showin'," chuckled Uncle Shoddy, as he stood bowing the guests from their carriages the afternoon of Mis' Beauty's Christmas wedding day.

The guests as they reached the hospitably wide door found Mammy eloquent and full of pride. Each greeted her as he passed, for most of them had known her since childhood, and she was ready with a cheerful answer to all.

"Good afternoon, Mammy; Merry Christmas!"

"Thankee, honeys; de same to you. Jes' walk dis way, Mis' Fitzhugh, as de Kangaroo said to Brudder Rabbit. De bridaly gif's is up stairs, but I reckon yer better communicake yerse'f to de parlor now, 'kase de udder guestes has arriv' an' hit's about time fer de parade to start. I kin show yer de tokens of famblyship arter dat's all over wid."

"I'm sure your Little Mis' has received some lovely gifts," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, as Mammy proudly led the party toward the parlor.

"Law, yas'm," answered Mammy. "I reckon Mis' Queenersheeper didn't git no mo' melodious things dan Mis' Beauty! Dr. Stuyvesant's folks is been 'tickly magnanimous, whilst de Quality down heah dat's knowed Mis' Beauty's pedigree since she were a baby, is done deirse'fs proud in sindin' reckomembrances. Jes' walk in heah," as they reached the parlor, "you'se de las' of pea-time, so yer'll have to stan' at dis end

I'se 'fraid. Dar, dey's startin' now," for the choir began to chant the Lohengrin Wedding March. "I knowed dey would be timely, fer Mis' Beauty ain't takin' no chances, an' Marse Parable is a reg'lar twin sister to a clock, he's so punctilious!"

As Mammy and Uncle Shoddy hastily took their stands, Brother and Little Sister led the way down the broad staircase to the aisle formed by red ribbons that terminated at the altar of holly. Huge masses of mistletoe and holly hung from the beams overhead, and the whole room was a bower of Christmas greens.

"Here comes the bride,
Dog-gone her hide.
See how she wabbles
From side to side!"

sang Little Sister in an audible whisper, vainly striving to keep time to the music.

"You mustn't sing, Little Sister," quickly commanded Brother, realizing from the

titter that ran through the room that there was something wrong.

"I'se got to, so's to keep time," she retorted, her baby lips ready for a pout. Flinging a glance of defiance at Brother, rigid in his best company manners, she continued to hum the words Black Mat had taught her, while the bride, leaning on Ole Marse's arm and looking the embodiment of loveliness and joy, passed slowly between the ribbons to the altar nestling in its bower of green.

The minister was ready this time, and Dr. Stuyvesant, having no organ to squat behind, had entered quietly from the library.

Mis' Beauty had never made a more perfect picture than when, surrounded by those she loved best, she placed her hand in that of Marse Parable, and looked into his face as the benediction was pronounced with a glance that sent the quick tears to Ole Mis's eyes.

Then followed a jollification that made the

"OH, IT CAN'T BE TIME TO GO," EXCLAIMED MIS' BEAUTY

roof beams ring. The big cake in the dining-room was cut, flowers were thrown all over the bride and groom, and greetings showered on "Mis' Stuyvesan' an' her man," till the whole scene resembled a joyous carnival. In the midst of it came Uncle Shoddy, ceremoniously announcing: "De carriage am waitin' yer displeasure, lady-an'-gemman-made-one-by-de-Lawd!"

"Oh, it can't be time to go," exclaimed Mis' Beauty.

"Yas'm, it are honey. I'se mos' unhappy to retaliate; hit sho'ly are."

"But how can I leave you, Dear-dear—Daddy—everybody!" cried Mis' Beauty, with quivering lips and wildly beating heart. "Oh," looking tearfully around—"How can I go!"

"Humph, hit's jes' like gittin' de Heavenly summons; eve'ybody pow'ful anxious ter go till de call soun's," said Cookie, "But yer's gwine have such a gloriumfactious honey trip, arter all, yer'll skip yer

troubles," she comforted, petting Mis' Beauty as if she were a baby. "An' yer'll fergit you'se married fo' ve'y long! An' I jes' wishes to say, Mis' Beauty, as my confirmations, dat, black an' white, I'se seen oodles of wusser gemmans dan dis 'un you'se got; an' as fer you, sah," turning to Marse Parable and shaking his hand, "yer sho' oughter be as good ter Mis' Beauty as de law allows; fer de Lawd doan invent 'em of no finer mud dan she are, an' you'se got a bargain, yer sho' is!" tears coming to her faithful eyes.

"I know it," said Dr. Stuyvesant in his deep kind tones. "You can depend on me, Cookie."

"Lawdy, yas'r, yer sho' is got a bargain, as Mis' Averett says," put in Mammy, clasping the bride to her warm bosom. Looking lovingly on the golden brown head, she said solemnly:

"Honey, I'se been many brides myse'f, but neber any of de times I'se married Uncle

Shoddy, or my udder gemman frien's, is I wished myse'f mo' joy dan I does you dis ve'y eternal momint!"

"Amen, sister, Amen!" majestically agreed Uncle Shoddy, as he helped "Mis' Stuyvesan'" into the waiting carriage. "May de benefaction of His race be upon yer!"

As the carriage drove off amid waving handkerchiefs, a bombardment of holly and the calls of farewell, Mis' Beauty looked out of the window at the Great House on the hill. At the side of it lay the old fashioned rose garden, sleeping in the winter sun. A pale shaft struck full on one of its gravelled walks as she looked, and Mis' Beauty's face glowed like a blossoming rose. "Good-bye, dear old garden! See, dear," she said softly, "there is the place where—"

"You made me the happiest man in the world," said Marse Parable, finishing her sentence for her, verbally—and otherwise.